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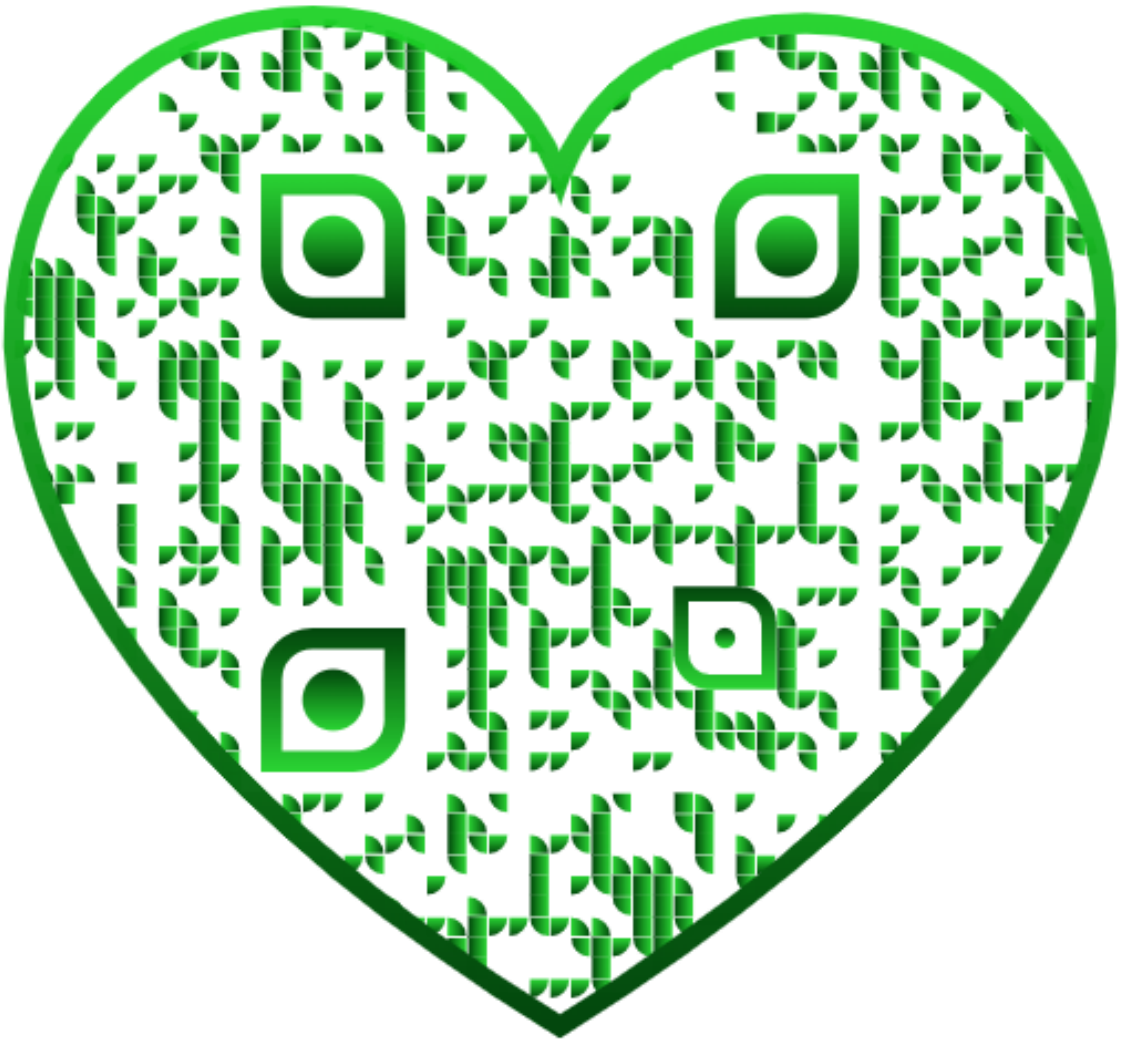

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FROM ONE COLLECTOR TO ANOTHER…

I've Got A Guy for That!

When you start collecting guitars there are a few people that you will want to have on your team. Guys or gals who you can work with, trust their opinion and even entrust with assisting you or your family members when it comes to vintage and/or collectible guitars in a time of need.

The first team member is a good guitar repair person. Especially when I am selling guitars I will often go to my repair guy and have the guitar set-up properly. You want the guitar up for sale to play and sound as best as it can (put your best foot forward). It will make the guitar more desirable if the action isn't a ½ of an inch off of the fretboard and the neck doesn't look like a roller coaster when looking down it. It is money well spent. Conversely the same is true. If I just bought a guitar I want it to play and sound it's best for me (and my playing experience). I will take a new aquisition to my repair guy to get it set up and checked out. Make sure all the electronics work well, have the pots cleaned… you get the picture.

The second person on your team is a friend who knows the guitar market and has some type of pulse of what is going on in it. When buying or selling there is wisdom in a multitude of counselors. You might cross-reference your friend's advice by finding a guitar forum or blog on-line that has good information. Do your homework about the guitar. Don't look as much at what others are "asking" pricewise of a similar guitar, but look at the "solds" history. What did they actually it sell for. That helps you dial in the current value better. Don't always believe a flowery description about a guitar you read on Craigslist or eBay. Sometimes the sellers are better at creative writing than they are at pricing their guitars correctly in the market place. Some guys price their guitars way higher than the norm just waiting for that P.T. Barnum quote, "There is a sucker born every minute", person to come across their path and actually believe the hype they are selling and overpay for an instrument. I have seen a few instances of this lately that have blown my mind.

So far you have a good repair person and a good pairing of counselors/good information gathering to advise your activities. The next two folks on your team are often overlooked and that could possibly be a mistake on your part.

Get good insurance! Really? Yes! You might not realize the current value on of your guitar collection but it may be higher than you think. Often times your typical home insurance policy will come up far weaker than you imagined… especially on vintage guitars. There are companies out there that specialize in insuring guitars. Check them out; don't be penny-wise and pound-foolish.

And the last role you need filled on your guitar team is a person you can trust to help your spouse/family members if something should happen to you. With many of our readers being baby boomers we need to consider this. I have seen several examples of a person not being prepared for this lately. Here are a few… a friend of mine passed away due to liver cancer (great guy but a heavy drinker) and he had an odd collection of 25 or more guitars – everyone of them wasn't valued over $500.00 each. His widow called me to tell me what a hard time she had trying to sell his quirky guitars that she knew nothing about. I tried to be "that guy" for her and her family. I sold three of her guitars for her and Judy and I even bought a triple neck guitar from her… it was actually the guitar she was having the hardest time finding a buyer for. We bought it not because it was a "deal" but because it was unique enough to have and it helped us remember our friend when we look at it. I use the photo of it on some of my Facebook guitar show ads to just catch other guitarist's attention. Your eyes are drawn to a triple neck guitar.

The second instance I saw this week was a guy who had 20-30 very nice vintage pieces who was ill and a good friend had stepped in to help him start to sell

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COLLECTIBLE GUITAR then and now

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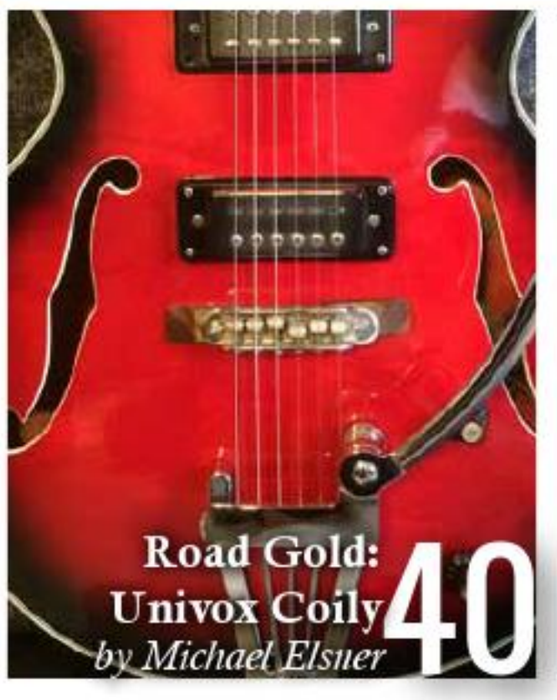

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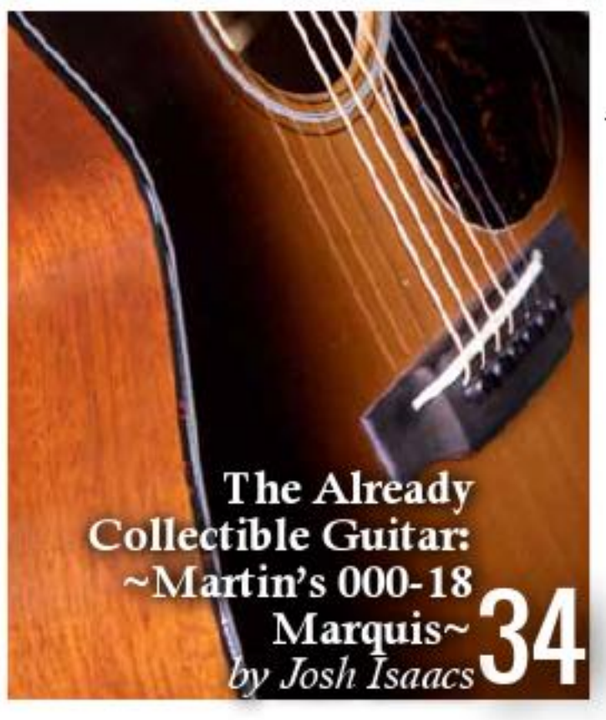

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Blackstar Artisan 30H Guitar Amplifier

by Doug Doppler

Before we get into the finer details, the most important thing I can say about the Artisan 30H is that the longer I played it, the more I wanted keep playing!

In case you didn't know, Blackstar was founded by a couple of clever chaps that used to work in the R&D department at Marshall, which means these guys know British amps – from the inside out. It is from and with the perspective one can truly appreciate the beauty of this amplifier.

Channel Tube Sets

This hand-wired 30-watt head features two discrete channels, each equipped with independent Hi and Lo inputs. Channel 1 utilizes an EF86 pre-amp tube, while Channel 2 uses an ECC83. The Class A power-amp section is fueled by a quad of EL84s which can be run at either 10 watts triode mode, or 30 watts pentode mode.

While the EL84 is key to the mojo of virtually all AC30-inspired amps, it is not the power amp tube of choice once you step into Plexi-land. That said, it makes perfect sense that a couple of former Marshall R&D guys figured out to bridge this gap – and brilliantly so.

Having spent a bunch of time playing the Artisan 100H, I plugged into the Artisan 30H prior to reading the manual, approaching it much like I would a vintage Plexi. As much as it did what I expected it to do, had I read the manual first I would have started to approach it much more like an AC30 – and I'm so glad I didn't. Point being, if you're looking for an amp that delivers a sweet mix of vintage AC30 and Plexi tones, read on!

Channel 1

If you approach this channel "thinking Plexi", there is a lot to love. With a Les Paul in hand, I started out with the volume control at 2:00, and the output set to the shockingly loud 10-Watt Pentode position. Toggling between the Lo and Hi inputs with the Les Paul instantly traversed between classic 70's and 80's Marshall-style tones. This channel features a 5-position Bass Shape control, as well as single Tone control, and together make for a really great way to dial in your tone. Where AC30's tend to break up on the bottom and chime on the top, this channel does a great job of keeping the low end tight while simultaneously delivering sparkling highs. I'll add that this channel also does a great job of "speaking Strat"!

Once I discovered how the AC30 channel was designed to function I pulled out the Gretsch guitar and truly relished the experience. Chords were massive and resulted in amazing feedback, especially at the volume I was playing at.

Channel 2

This ECC83-driven channel delivers tones that range from sparkly cleans to classic British crunch, and features (Master) Volume, Treble, Middle, Bass, and Gain controls. It also sports a two-position Bright / Warm switch that in the Warm position really opens up the bottom end, which I would be most inclined to use at lower gain settings for jazz-ier tones.

With the Les Paul in the bridge position, toggling between the Lo and Hi inputs with Gain control cranked… the head delivered a markedly different, but very useful experience compared to Channel 1. While Channel 1 delivered a brilliant shift in tonal character, Channel 2 offered a shift in the amount of gain, which would be very useful in the studio – especially for double-tracking.

There is a lot to love about this amp, so if it sounds like it might suit your fancy, I'd strongly suggest checking one out!

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When Doug Doppler is not writing gear reviews, the former Guitar Hero session player and Favored Nations recording artist spends his days, hours, weeks and years demoing the coolest gear on the planet for his web site GearTunes.com.

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QUIRKY VINTAGE

by Bob Cianci

EKO 500/4V

In previous columns, we've examined the quirky guitars of various countries and regions in overview fashion, but starting this month and going forward, we'll look at one guitar at a time, to give you, the reader, an in-depth look at some of the world's weirdest and sometimes coolest electric guitars. We'll start with Italy's EKO 500/4V solidbody, but first, let's examine the history of the EKO company itself, Italy's largest producer of guitars.

In 1959, visionary businessman and successful accordion maker Oliviero Pigini became convinced that it was time to stop producing the venerable squeezebox that had been the bread and butter of his company, and start concentrating on guitars. It wasn't Pigini's first brush with selling guitars; he had outsourced inferior Yugoslavian acoustics for a short while in the late 1950's, but they proved so poorly made, Pigini stopped selling them. He then began an association with Wenzel Rossmeisl of Germany, to build archtop acoustic and electric guitars, and a gentleman named Bruno Baldoni to build amplifiers. It wasn't long before Pigini realized he needed to produce his own guitars, so a staff was hired and manufacturing was set up in July 1960, as rock music began to invade European countries via American rockers like Elvis Presley, Gene Vincent, Bill Haley & The Comets, and Sun records artists like Perkins and Jerry Lee Lewis.

The ancestor of the 500-4V was the 400 series guitars, that bore a resemblance to the Hofner Club series. From the beginning, Mr. Pigini strove to build a full range of quality instruments with standardized production methods that enabled him to offer affordable choices for younger players. One of the few real innovations seen on EKO guitars was the brightly colored plastic sheeting used to cover the tops of the guitars. This plastic, called Pyroxylin in Europe, had been used to wrap drums (and accordions) for years, was left over from the time production of accordions ceased. What to do with all that plastic? Put it on the guitars. What a concept!

And so it came to pass that Oliviero Pigini invented the plastic covered electric guitar that was eventually copied by other guitar makers around the world, but particularly in Italy. The plastic rendered the guitar's finish nearly bullet-proof, although we should mention that some of EKO's guitars were made with a natural wood finish as well.

By 1961, EKO guitars were available throughout Western Europe. Meanwhile, in the USA, musical instrument distributors, the LoDuca Brothers of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, were in need of an electric guitar line that would compete with American guitars but a lower price. They contacted Pigini and a deal was struck to bring EKO guitars to The USA. Pigini managed to get financial backing, hire more staff and move his operation from Castelfidardo to an abandoned silk factory in nearby Recanati, Italy. All this was accomplished in a matter of months. It was shortly afterwards that the 500 series guitars were designed and built.

With a body shape reminiscent of Fender's Jaguar and Jazzmaster, the 500 series guitars featured the ubiquitous Pyroxylin plastic covered tops in colors like red, silver, gold and blue sparkle, a fake wood grain, and a unique white "mother of toilet seat" finish. They were an instant hit with their good looks and modern sound, featuring one, two, three, or four "Double Polarity" pickups, unpotted single coil units that featured a total of eighteen magnets each! A vibrato was available for each model symbolized by the suffix "V". The 500 series guitars were the flagship of The EKO line from 1962 until 1965, and were widely distributed throughout the world. As a result, they are available today at reasonable prices, but are becoming increasingly scarce as time goes on.

Bob's EKO

One unnamed New York City guitar dealer uncovered a stash of new old stock EKOs several years ago, and was charging $2500 apiece for them, which was outrageously expensive back then. Realistically, a nice 500/4V should set you back anywhere from $900-$1200.

In terms of quality, the EKO 500 guitars were mid-line at best. You would never consider them high quality such as a Fender or Gibson, but certainly they played and looked better than the low-end Japanese import Teiscos and other trashy treasures that flooded the market after the Beatle Boom of '64.

This writer is the happy owner of a '62 500/4V, purchased from a cash-strapped young man in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania for $300 two years ago. It's the second one I have owned. The body shape is really quite elegant, with a pronounced Fender-like appeal. It was missing the top of the bridge, which held the strings in place, but was otherwise all original. After I obtained the guitar, I contacted a friend in Denmark who sells funky Euro guitars and parts, and he had the bridge top, which I acquired. The EKO then went to one of my guitar techs, Tony Marchitelli of Caldwell, New Jersey. Tony disassembled the guitar, put the nicely bound, bolt-on neck in a heat press, as it had a convex bow, fashioned a Jaguar trem arm to fit in place of the long-missing one, set it up and rewired it completely. He also re-glued some of the gold plastic channeling that helps keep the plastic top in place on the body, and a couple of

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"Quirky Vintage" continued from page 10

weeks later, she was ready to rock.

The back of the guitar and six-in-line headstock are painted black, with white trim that runs around the entire headstock, although some were made with plastic covered backs. The neck itself is three-piece with a solid volute, and is painted an attractive sunburst black to natural wood. The scale length is 25". The guitar features a beautiful tortoiseshell pickguard that looks great on the "mother of toilet seat" top with the EKO logo affixed to the top left, in… plastic, of course. A "Made in Italy" ribbon banner decal graces the rear of the headstock.

Try as I might, I was unable to find much information online in terms of specifications for the EKO 500s. One must consider that these guitars were manufactured it a time when companies rarely mentioned build materials in their marketing efforts (neither did drum companies for that matter). One can surmise that birch was used, and the fretboard appears to be Brazilian rosewood, with unique plastic inlays that resemble cantilever wing airplanes or propellers.

One of the most quirky features of the 500 EKOs is the infamous "Veg-O-Matic" switches on the left side of the pickguard. These are labeled as follows and allow the following combinations to be accessed from the neck pickup down: M: mellow rhythm sound, but I'm unsure which pickups are activated; 1, neck pickup; 4, bridge pickup; 1+4, neck and bridge pickups; 2+3, middle two pickups; 0, all pickups off. In spite of these odd combinations, it's not hard to find good, usable sounds. The bridge pickup is actually very nice sounding; certainly not that awful "ice pick" tone, in fact, the 500/4V sounds like no other guitar in my collection.

To test it out, I finally took the 500/4V on a gig to test it out under live conditions. It performed beautifully on songs like "Dead Flowers" by the Rolling Stones, and other lighter tunes where one would use clean tone, but the second I added overdrive, the pickups began to squeal and shriek like a proverbial banshee. Then, I remembered they're unpotted and susceptible to high volume and overdrive.

Okay, admittedly the 500/4V is a niche guitar. It's not a hard rock or metal player, it doesn't have unlimited sustain, and it's certainly not a shred machine, but for sheer '60's hip, quirky vintage coolness, the EKO 500/4V is hard to beat when used under the right conditions.

Bob Cianci is a lifelong musician, music journalist, and author of the book, Great Rock Drummers of The Sixties, and has written extensively for many guitar and drum publications, newspapers, websites, and fanzines. He is a working guitarist and drummer in three bands in New Jersey. His guitar collection numbers over twenty-five pieces at the moment, and is constantly evolving.

"From One Collector..." cont. from page 6

off a few pieces to help pay the rising medical bills. The guy who was sick was having a hard time parting with even 2 or 3 guitars in his collection but the illness was forcing him to face the music.

A tough spot to be in for sure…

Another one I have seen played out recently is a daughter who was left 5 or 6 guitars from her father. Again a guitar playing friend stepped in. He had done his research well and sold a few of them and then he remembered me and gave me a call. I ended up buying a 2001 Custom Shop Merle Haggard Signature Fender Telecaster from him and a 1920's Gibson mando-banjo. The seller knew the market and knew that if I bought them to flip that I would need some margin in the deal to make it work and he priced the instruments accordingly. He raised a good amount of money for the daughter and saved her a lot of time, money and energy in the process.

I actually have worked out a deal with "my guy" to assist Judy should she need it if something happens to me. I know we all live like nothing will ever happen to us but perhaps it is time to access your own situation. Judy and I have discussed which guitar she will keep for herself, which ones may go to my three sons and even though I don't have a lot – which guitars need to go up for sale to raise some funds for her.

The "deal" I worked out with my friend is that not only is he willing to step in and help her out when the time is right but also Judy will give him 10% of the proceeds as a thank you. It can be a lot of work to take the photos, find the right places to post them, consider the fees involved, glean through offers (some good and some bad) and then finalize the sale, pack the guitar safely and ship out the goods. I believe it is the right thing to do and it also gives your "seller friend" some extra motivation to get a good price for the guitars, amps and pedals you are putting back into the market again.

As the baby boomer population ages (as gracefully as it can) there is going to be more and more instruments come into play. This is just a natural part of living and dying. I am not trying to be morbid here but the truth is… none of us are going to make it out of here alive. That is a humbling thought and may lead you to insights about the meaning of life itself.

But as far as collectible guitars go, I think it is good to have a well-developed plan for your guitar collection knowing the fact that you will not always be here. So gather a team of good folks around you so you can say for yourself, "I have a guy for that!"

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THE ONE THAT DIDN'T GET AWAY

by Rick King

The Chuck Berghofer 1959 Fender Precision Bass – the "Barney Miller" Bass

photos by Joe Riggio

I have been attending the Texas guitar shows for approximately 30 years. As I mentioned in my previous article, my first trip consisted of my friend Eric and I getting in my tiny S-10 truck, hauling a 6-foot U-Haul trailer. I did this until I could no longer endure sitting in a vehicle for that long. I then discovered Delta Air Cargo. For many years I would load my gear into their LD2 aluminum containers, in which I could fit about 50 guitars. All I would have to do is rent a van to pick the guitars up in Texas and take them to the venue. This worked for many years until the unions would no longer allow me to load the container on their property. I then switched to Southwest Air Cargo. They did not use the aluminum containers like Delta. Everything would be shipped bulk with the rest of the luggage, which meant I would have to put fragile guitars in boxes. Shipping big heavy amplifiers was out of the question. Southwest Air Cargo seemed careful and more understanding of fragile instruments. To date they haven't damaged a single guitar.

A little over 10 years ago I met Peter Huggins. He had recently started hauling the guitars for a lot of the California dealers in the Los Angeles area. He later purchased his own Penske truck and started also delivering guitars for dealers in the Bay area. One of those dealers, a good friend of mine Jay Rosen, suggested he also haul my guitars to and from the Texas and California shows. Peter has helped me greatly, by allowing me to take amplifiers and other large, fragile items to the shows. Our friendship has grown through the years and he has had "my back" on many occasions and, as a bonus, has found some amazing guitars for me to buy. One that is very close to my heart that Peter found is the Chuck Berghofer 1959 Fender Precision Bass – "Barney Miller" Bass. This bass sits proudly at my recording studio, Uptone Recorders. In the short time I have had it, it has logged in many hours.

Peter has some history with this bass. To the best of his recollection, the first time he saw this bass was in 1976. His good friend Greg Bell, was taking guitar lessons from Howard Roberts. How-

ard had just invited him to attend his new school he was starting up, the Guitar Institute of Technology (GIT). Howard Roberts and the Magic Band were playing at Donte's Jazz Club in North Hollywood. Greg and his band Fellowship, went to the show. His bassist, Colin Sauers, noticed that Chuck Berghofer's bass had a Jazz Bass pick-up added to it. Peter noted that was the first time he or anyone with him had ever seen such a modification. They asked Chuck about it and during the break he brought it over to their table so they could take a look.

The bass was a 1959 Precision, sunburst finish, with a slab rosewood fret board. The body was routed below the pickguard and fitted with a stock rear Jazz Bass pick-up. He also pointed out the pole pieces sticking through the pickguard from the Gibson bass humbucker hidden underneath. If he hadn't pointed it out to them, they would have missed it. The bass is wired quite simply. Each pick-up has its own volume knob. All pick-ups share one tone knob. Within a month or so Colin had a Jazz bass pickup installed on his Precision bass, and within a year custom builders such as Schecter were selling basses with the P/J combination.

Many years later, in the 2000's, Peter said he ran into Chuck again. He was playing with John Pisano at the Jazz Christmas party held at California Vintage Guitar. They had an Epiphone acoustic stand-up bass, which Chuck quickly became enamored with. He was primarily playing stand-up bass by then and hardly any electric at all. The next day he brought in the old P-bass and traded it in on the Epiphone. It had been refinished natural and had a maple neck from a '70s Telecaster bass fitted. Peter asked him about it and he said he had backed over it with his car! Peter knew it was the bass from the Barney Miller TV theme song, but then Chuck told him he had used it on all the Phil Spector Wrecking Crew sessions that he had been booked on.

Peter told me that they had just got the bass in on trade. I told him that I wanted it but it was not for sale. The bass sat in David Swartz's office, the owner of California Vintage, for 3 or 4 years. One day he must have decided to put it out for sale on the showroom floor. That is when Peter gave me a call and told me it was for sale. David was very kind to me with our deal and I was very pleased at the price. He knew it was going to a good home and that we would continue to use it as it was meant to be used, in the studio. I am so glad that this one did not get away!

Rick King is the owner of Guitar Maniacs in Tacoma Washington. He lives in Gig Harbor with his wife Sheila, two dogs and a cat. Contact Rick: rickking58@gmail.com

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ALL ABOUT AMPS

with Skip Simmons

Still More On Tubes…

If you are shopping for tubes, it won't be long before you read, "XYZ brand tubes will radically improve the tone of your amp!" Different tubes of the same type can sound different, but expecting dramatic, life-changing "improvement" by using a certain brand of tube may prove disappointing. Before deciding that you need to "re-tube," keep in mind that good tubes, especially preamp tubes, will usually last for many years in a well-designed tube amp. Also, don't expect a tube change to dramatically affect the tone unless a tube is actually bad or you are swapping for a tube with a different amount of gain, like subbing a 12AX7 with a 12AU7. One popular swap for harmonica amps is substituting a lower-gain preamp tube for the stock tube. This really can make a harmonica amp easier to play by reducing the gain, especially in a high-gain circuit like the tweed Bassman.

Keep that speaker plugged in - Some of us love to experiment with different speakers and it is easy to turn an amp on without a speaker hooked up. An amp won't instantly blow up if this happens, but if a strong signal is sent to the amp without a speaker connected, a blown output transformer can result. Keep it in mind!

Don't ignore the lowly pilot light - I have seen quite a few amps that had been left on by mistake for weeks or even months. In every case, the owner did not realize the amp was on because the pilot light was burned out. If it is an old Fender, the amp will probably survive this torture, but always replace that pilot light bulb ASAP if it goes out. Most amps use a #47 bulb that is easily available.

The Great Standby Switch Conspiracy - The standby switch was originally intended to be a way to silence the amp without actually turning it off. When it was time for your 15 minute break, using the standby switch would effectively turn the amp completely off, but still allow for instant sound without waiting for the amp to warm up. It works great for this purpose.

Somewhere along the line, someone decided that having your amp on standby every minute that you weren't actually playing would extend the life of the tubes. In reality, it won't make a significant difference unless you are keeping the amp on 24 hours a day. The other crazy "rule" I hear concerning the standby switch involves turning the amp on for the first time. Supposedly, when powering up the amp you should wait a certain amount of time before turning the standby switch to "play" mode in order to protect your tubes from "premature cathode-stripping." Scientifically this is true, but in reality, waiting more than ten seconds or so before turning the standby switch to "play" can cause a big surge of current to flow through the amp; you hear it as big "thump" in the speaker. This surge can also cause the fuse to blow or (common in old Fenders) the standby switch itself to arc internally.

Fun with speakers - In order for a tube amp to develop its maximum power with the least distortion, an amp's output impedance should be matched to the impedance of the speaker cabinet. In other words, an amp with a 4 ohm output should be connected to a 4 ohm cabinet. However, in the real world a good old tube amp can tolerate a mismatch of up to 100% (up or down) without harming the amp in any way, so feel free to experiment a little. A popular thing to do is to add an extension speaker to your small combo amp. This doesn't actually make the amp more powerful, but adding another speaker does add more apparent volume and punch. Remember, all classic Fender amps have a single fixed impedance, yet all the larger amps have parallel-wired extension-speaker jacks for which Fender sold matching extension cabinets. In other words, old Leo himself said the mismatch was just fine.

Try two 8-ohm speakers with your Deluxe, or run that tweed Champ through an old 8 ohm P12R and be amazed! I know a few pros who deliberately mismatch the speaker/amp impedance because they prefer the tone of a certain speaker. Putting a 16-ohm speaker on an 8-ohm amp will likely clean up the bass a bit while putting a 4-ohm load on the same amp can make it sound more loose in the bass. A mismatch of greater than 100% is not good, so don't try it. And last but not least, always use guitar cords for guitars and speaker cords for speakers. No exceptions allowed on this one, even for short-term testing purposes.

Your old tube amp is not a ticking time bomb. People who have recently purchased their first vintage amp often go online to educate themselves and are told that their amp is a "time bomb" just waiting to self-destruct if one little capacitor fails. Relax! Classic Fender amps don't often blow power transformers or otherwise "self-destruct" due to capacitor failure. The key is to use the right fuse. If your amp has a shorted tube or capacitor, the fuse was designed to pop before any other damage occurs to the amp. Most quality vintage amps were carefully designed, by very smart people, to run conservatively… and to be safe from a "meltdown" due to component failure.

Skip Simmons is a nationally known vintage amp repairman.

He can be reached at SkipSimmonsAmps.com

STATE OF THE UNION

by David Belzer

"The Guitar Show"

There are many places that you can look to find that vintage guitar of your dreams. You know the one; the guitar that your rock hero played and you wanted to sound just like that. Whether it was a Stratocaster like Jimi Hendrix, the Gibson 335 like Eric Clapton in Cream, or a Les Paul sunburst like Jimmy Page, it fired up the passion inside you that re-ignites whenever you see those guitars.

That's where the fun of going to a vintage guitar show comes in. Guitars from everywhere, all kinds, right there in one place for your sensory and auditory pleasure.

The invention of the Internet changed the world as we knew it, and it's impact was felt on the guitar show world as well. With the endless help of the World Wide Web, you can peruse page after page of vintage instruments, enlarging and viewing the detail of every little thing on the guitar right from your own home. But even with all that, you just can't feel how they play from the pictures. You can't hear how they sound, or just feel the "vibe" when you strum across the strings. Enter the Vintage Guitar Show! These shows give you a great opportunity to meet, mingle and wheel and deal with many of the well-known vintage guitar dealers in the country. And it's also the opportunity for you to see hundreds of guitars all in one place. It's like having a number of little guitar shops all together, giving customers and dealers a chance to interact with each other in a way that just doesn't exist inside the constraints of a store.

Guitar shows have been around since the late 70's, when a Dallas guitar shop owner Charlie Wirz came up with the idea of establishing and promoting a vintage guitar show along the lines of similar collectable shows... leasing booths to dealers along with collectors too. It really all began in a small meeting room in a Dallas hotel in 1978 and over the last 37 years has grown and grown until now there are thousands of guitar shows and festivals staged around the world.

Those of us in the vintage guitar business have spent many days walking the floors of these shows, buying, selling, trading and looking for that great guitar that would make our day. And like most things, these shows have evolved. The first guitar show I attended was in 1988. It was held at the Nashville Ramada Inn at Opry Land. Dealers setup next to the indoor pool and when you first walked in the smell of chlorine was over whelming. I would guess there were thirty or forty dealers at that show. People were playing, buying, trading or just talking guitars everywhere in the hotel. I had never seen anything like that before. I thought I died and went to heaven. From the lobby to the restaurant to the hotel rooms there were guitars everywhere and the vibe was not so much dollar motivated as it is today, but more a celebration of the guitar. Over the next few years that show expanded to three floors of dealers before the venue just became too small to accommodate all the dealers and the growing public traffic.

Like most things, vintage guitar shows are not what they used to be, but they can still be a good place to find the guitar you were looking for or the guitar you might want to sell.

Those early guitar shows were rich in people bringing in rare vintage guitars to

sell or trade. Just imagine a humble looking man walking into a guitar show with a promising looking brown Gibson or Fender tweed case and several vintage dealers all swooping in to get first crack at it. There is an etiquette involved, and many times you'll see dealers just waiting to see if the dealer who got there first will pass on the piece or not.

The evolution of vintage guitar shows continues, and many of them have expanded to include inventory of newer guitars, as well as entertainment. Over the last decade even the original Dallas Guitar show, once a strict vintage guitar show, has transformed itself into more of a music festival designed to give it a more family feel with lots of new instruments as well as many dealers selling all kinds of things guitar and non-guitar related.

So if you've never gone to a guitar show, you should give it a try. For the price of admission (yes, you do have to pay to get in) you'll have access to hundreds of guitars, knowledgeable vintage guys to answer your questions, and depending on where you go, you might even hear some great music. I was recently at the SoCal World Guitar Show in Orange County, CA and it was great to see how many people attended, and that tradition of buying, selling and trading at these shows is still going strong. And it was great to see dealers from all over the world keeping the guitar show tradition alive. It is genuinely a community as well as a tradition. And although finding that awesome rare guitar has become even more rare than the guitar itself, the vintage guitar show lives on.

David Belzer is one of the top vintage guitar authorities in the world, with over 30 years of experience in vintage. His knowledge of vintage guitars is only exceeded by his passion for playing them.

For more information or to contact him directly, visit www.burstbrothers.com

HOT'LANTA

by Bruce Adolph

photos by Joe Riggio *unless stated otherwise*

It is an interesting thing to see how cover stories emerge for me as a publisher of Collectible Guitar magazine and this one was no different. I was on Craigslist Seattle one night just poking around and I came across a listing for a James Goodall acoustic guitar. I have owned two Goodall guitars before had gotten a chance to meet James and Jeane Goodall (super nice people). So I reached out to the guy in the listing to talk Goodall guitars (they rarely pop up in my area) and as we got to know each other a bit more and talk guitars I mention to him that I publish this magazine. The guy told me that he worked at the EMP Museum and that they had some special guitars there on exhibit. Eric Clapton's "Brownie" Stratocaster, Jimi Hendrix's white Strat that he played at Woodstock and several other high profile and/or highly historical instruments. Well. He had me at "Brownie" so we set up a time when our house photographer and magazine advisor Joe Riggio and I could go and meet some of the folks at EMP to get a private tour of the esteemed (and very creative) pop culture museum.

We drove into downtown Seattle and right next to the famous Space Needle stands the uniquely designed EMP building. The vision and funding of this ultra-cool museum came from the highly successful Paul Allen (Microsoft billionaire and owner of our beloved Seattle Seahawks football team). Mr. Allen is a guitar player and collector as well and he donated several of the instruments that the EMP now owns.

Upon arriving at EMP we met Jasen Emmons, EMP's Director of Curatorial Affairs. We were totally impressed with the museum and it's care for these iconic instruments. What was offered next is what led to this cover story. Jasen told us that "Hot'Lanta", one of Duane Allman's famous Les Paul's was hand delivered by his daughter Galadrielle Allman to be showcased there at EMP and that we would be welcome to come and photograph it before it was sealed in it's protective display case.

We set the date and came back the following week to do the photo shoot. The EMP staffers were both very profes-

EMP stock

sional and also welcoming to us at the same time.

I next reached out to Galadrielle herself and set up this interview. Then I bought her book "Please Be With Me – A Song for My Father" and read it entirely before we sat down to talk. Twenty minutes before our interview time she was kind enough to have Tommy Alderson (long time guitar tech for Steve Morse) talk to me about the guitars and how he had prepared them for the farewell concert of the Allman Brothers at the Beacon Theater in New York.

Here is my chat with Tommy…

Bruce Adolph: Tommy, tell me how you came to work on some of Duane Allman's guitars?

Tommy: It's a pretty long story! Back when Twiggs Lyndon was the road manager for the Allman Brothers (everybody knows that history. . .) Twiggs ended up with Duane Allman's Tobacco Burst Les Paul. Then Twiggs passed away and his younger brother Warren "Skoots" Lyndon ended up the Tobacco Burst to take care of it. Skoots recommended me, because I've been working with him for the last 15 years or more, through Steve Morse. That's how I became connected with the Allman family. Skoots recommended me to Galadrielle (Duane's daughter) to have me come up and prep these guitars that had been in storage for decades.

Bruce: The one that we have in the photo shoot, which we photographed at the EMP Museum in Seattle, WA, is the one that they call the "Tobacco Burst". Even though it has a dark red around the edges, they've been calling it the Tobacco Burst.

Tommy: It looks almost like a Cherry.

Bruce: So this had been in storage for many years when you got it, right? Did you get all three guitars?

Tommy: The Tobacco Burst wasn't actually in storage. The Cherry Burst had been in storage for a long time, but the Tobacco Burst had been played over the years.

Bruce: The Cherry Burst and the Tobacco Burst were in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland for a while. Regarding the Tobacco Burst, it's the one that has the frets on the back that spell "Duane" on the back of it. Some folks think that Duane did that himself, but I've heard other stories that say that it was done after he passed away. Do you know the true story?

Tommy: I think Twiggs did that after Duane passed away. The guitar needed re-fretting, but Twiggs didn't want to even let the original frets go, so he just hammered them into the back of the guitar, spelling "Duane".

Bruce: Great! That answers one of my big questions.

Tommy: Skoots is very knowledgeable about that guitar too. He took care of it for quite a few years. Steve Morse too, because Skoots was working with Steve. It was actually kept at Steve's studio for quite a long time.

Bruce: So do you imagine that Steve did some recording with it?

Tommy: Absolutely, yes.

Bruce: What about the Gold Top? Do we know where it is now?

Tommy: A guy named Scott Lamar owns that, and I think it is typically at the Allman Brother's Big House Museum in Macon, GA. Richard Brent is involved with the museum there and Scott has been kind enough to let the guitar be displayed and shared.

Bruce: I think I had heard something about that. Very cool!

Who has the Cherry Burst now?

Tommy: Derek Trucks had it when he left New York but I am pretty sure Galadrielle has it back by now. Listening to him play it really makes me believe in the magic of that guitar!

Bruce: Different people have different opinions about this next question, but which guitar do you think was the "Layla" guitar?

Tommy: I think that the Gold Top was the "Layla" guitar, and what I think happened was that Duane was hanging out with Eric there and doing Layla. He saw Eric Clapton's Cherry Top and he really wanted one. So he went and traded the Gold Top for the Cherry Top, but

photo by: Richard Brent

he kept the pickups out of the Gold Top and swapped them. The Gold Top is a '57, and he put those humbuckers in the Cherry Top, and the '59 pickups went into the Gold Top, and then off that guitar went. The result was the Cherry Burst with the '57 humbuckers in it.

Bruce: Covered or uncovered?

Tommy: Uncovered. I don't know when Duane uncovered them, but I'm pretty sure they were uncovered by him. I've seen pictures of Duane with that guitar and they were uncovered.

Bruce: This is really helping. There is so much mis-information on the Internet, it is really hard to know who to believe.

Tommy: There really are a lot of dots to connect, but once you get the important ones, then you can eliminate a lot of the other stuff.

Bruce: Now, in the 1969 photos of him doing session work in New York, Duane's playing a Fender Strat. Do you know if he owned that?

Tommy: I'm pretty sure he had a Strat and a twin amp for awhile, but that was pretty early on. I don't really know much of the history that far back. I'd like to know what happened to that Strat.

Bruce: Will McFarlane is a friend of mine, and he tells me that he's played Duane's Telecaster. Some guy he knows has a Tele that Duane had, and it's a good sounding Tele. I've never seen a picture of Duane with a Tele.

Tommy: Me neither. I have a Tele too, but I've never taken it on a gig. I'm sure Duane was looking for a different sound than that Tele has.

Bruce: Do you know what period of his career Duane played the Tobacco Burst Les Paul? Was that later on in his career?

Tommy: Yeah, that was a little later on. That guitar was actually pieced together from what I understand. I know the headstock, if not replaced, was at least repaired extensively. I didn't have time to take the pots apart to date the pots.

Bruce: Do you think the Tobacco Burst is a '59?

Tommy: I'm pretty sure it is. The only way to know for sure would be to pull the pots out, and I just didn't want to do that. It wasn't a priority during the restoration.

I can't tell you how incredible it was to play those guitars for a few days. Once I had them cleaned up, they really started singing!

Bruce: Was the Cherry Burst not stored well? Was that a problem?

Tommy: No, it was stored well. There wasn't anything wrong with it that was bizarre. It's just that over time oxidation occurs on the chrome-plated parts. I had to really clean out the bridge saddle (pneumatic bridge), and the nut slots and the frets, then clean all the gunk out of the fretboard and buff the frets back out. The electronics needed to be cleaned, and I adjusted the output jack so that it was quiet again. But I didn't have to replace anything or re-solder anything.

After I got the guitars cleaned up, I literally wrote five songs in just a few days on those guitars. Playing those guitars was like being on sensory overload, and was very inspirational. And I have to say that I really preferred the tone of the Cherry Burst. It was far and away my favorite. It was a very low output guitar, especially compared to the Tobacco Burst. The Tobacco Burst has a much "hotter" output.

Bruce: Maybe that's why he called it "Hot'Lanta".

Tommy: That could be. It is a seriously hot guitar. It has one of the hottest bridge humbuckers that I've seen. But it didn't have the clarity of the Cherry Burst. When I handed the Cherry Burst to Derek for the first time (I had already been playing it for a few days), I told him, "Just let the guitar talk to you and it will tell you what to play. There is so much life in this guitar."

He came back to me in the middle of a set and said, "You were right! This thing is telling me what to play."

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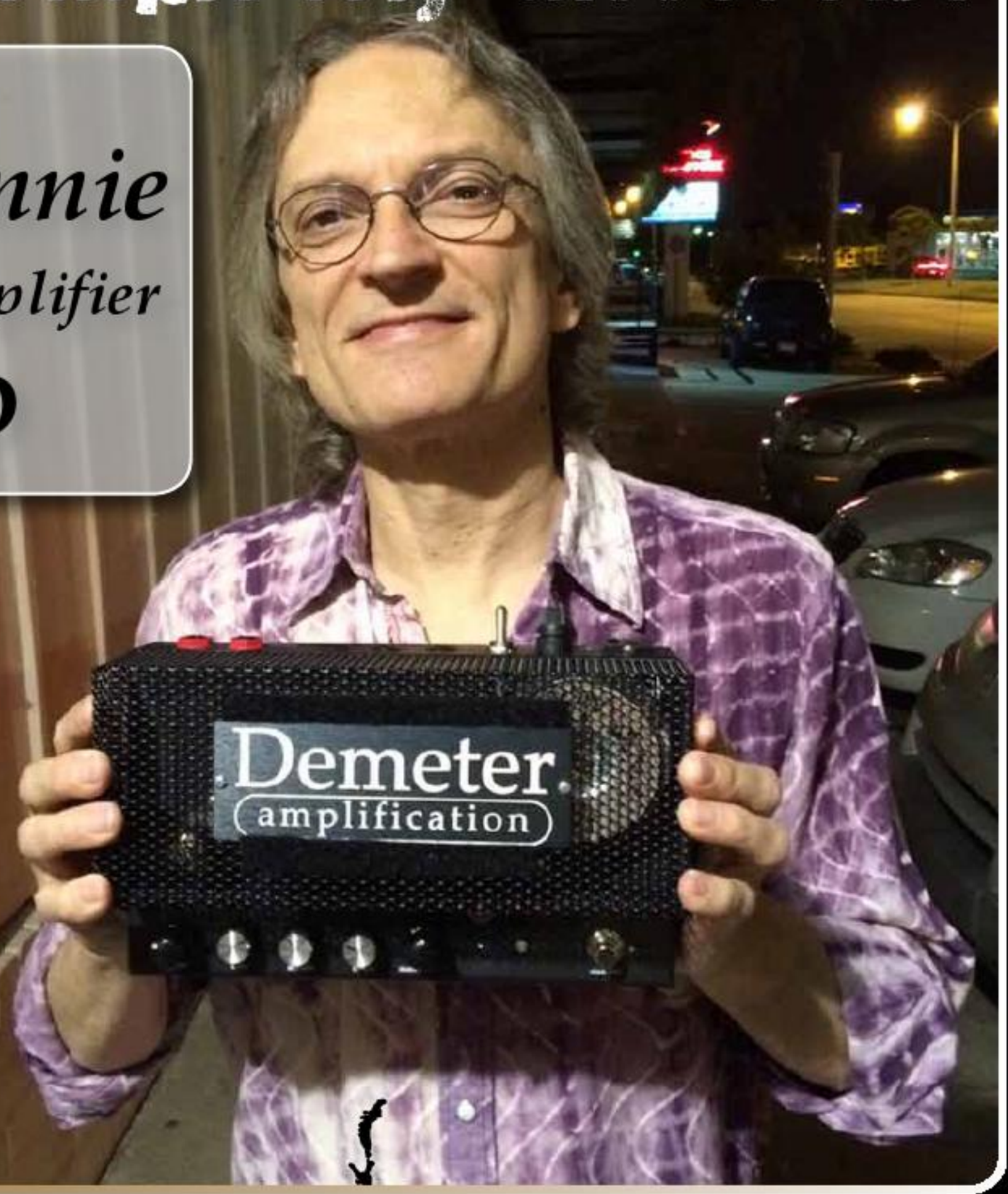

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Bruce: Thank you so much for your stories and your input on the history of Duane Allman and these special guitars that he played.

Now my attention turned to Galadrielle… I found her very easy to talk with yet also an engaging personality. Here is our conversation…

Bruce: Your father left us (the fans) with such a great legacy of music, but for you it runs deeper than that. It's more like a conversation and a guard over you as his daughter. Can you tell us about that?

Galadrielle: The sad truth is that I was only 2 years old when he died, so I really did have to look for him in his friends and in our family, but at the end of the day the music is really vivid and personal to him. His tone is so recognizable and his approach is very uniquely his, so his music really told me the most about him, in terms of what his personality was like and what his drive was like. As I grew and could begin to think about the music more with the intent of understanding it, the music became more meaningful to me and began to answer some of my questions about my father. It's all there. There are stories in the music, and his personality is really in the music. It's helpful.

Bruce: I think it's great how you went around and went back to the exact locations and went back to the people, and I'm sure that you gathered a little bit here and there and gleaned from this story and that story; You painted a very vivid picture for the readers. I really enjoyed the book!

Galadrielle: Thank you so much! Yes, it was a very long process for me, because I was really learning how to write it as I was writing it. It was the first thing that I've written of this length, and the first thing I have had published. I knew I only had one shot to tell my family's story the right way. The book transformed the way I see my father, which was a part of my goal. I think, first and foremost, I had to please myself with the story and give myself a sense of seeing my dad as a full person. As much as he is revered for what he accomplished, his story wasn't out there in a fully fleshed out way. Getting his complete story out to the world was always my intention.

Bruce: Your relationship with your Uncle Gregg seems to be very sweet as well. How is he doing these days?

Galadrielle: He's doing great! I actually saw him a couple of weeks ago. He was in town performing at AT&T park with his band for a car dealer convention. He was remarkable! He is in great voice, and his band is totally smokin'. They have a horn section and a great piano player, and Gregg seems really happy playing his songs. I love a lot of his solo material. I have always loved the Laid Back album, and he plays many of those songs, so it was great to hear him. He is going to keep touring as he's always done. He's going to make music for the rest of his life… I have no doubt.

Bruce: Your book not only tells the story of your father so well, but also of your mother and some of the challenges that she went through with Duane. Do you find yourself sometimes in the role of peacemaker between the two while you were writing the book?

Galadrielle: That's interesting… The thing about my parents is that they were incredibly young. My mom was 18 when she met my dad, and he was 20 or 21, so I think that her peace about him naturally came to her as she got older and could look at it with a different perspective. There wasn't a lot of peace left that I needed to make. I do think that it was very healing for her to talk to me about him in a focused way. My mom didn't know a lot about the Allman family or Duane's childhood because he was so "in the moment" and so forward

photo: Brady Harvey/EMP Museum

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looking. He didn't tell her stories about being a kid or things that he'd gone through. She was really moved to be able to learn about his early life through the book and it was very cool to be able to share that with her.

In terms of their relationship, it was a moment in time that I'm sure is still painful for her to think about, but she's found healing in her own way over time.

Bruce: It's cool that you're the family historian.

Galadrielle: I hope that people who read it also see it as a family story. I don't think you necessarily need to be an Allman Brothers fan to get something from Please Be With Me. It's the story of a family that has survived the loss.

Bruce: As well known as the Allman Brothers band was, it's kind of interesting that the song "Layla" has become the most recognized by most people in the world as a part of Duane's playing. What was it like when you went and talked with Eric Clapton about this?

Galadrielle: Well I actually didn't talk with Eric Clapton. I tried to reach him, but I finally ended up using an interview that he had done with a graduate student years ago. Their talk was very personal and is a remarkable document. That's where I got my quotes from Clapton.

He is in a whole different level of fame at this stage and it wasn't possible to get through to him. I do hope that he reads my book someday and recognizes his friendship with my father. I tried to do it justice.

Bruce: You did a good job with it.

Warren Haynes and Derek Trucks have both been carrying the torch of Duane's music for years now. What is your relationship like with them?

Galadrielle: It's great with both of them. They are both generous and kind, and I've learned a lot from watching them play. They were both very open to answering questions about my dad and his approach. Because of them, the band has had a whole, second, third, fourth life… Warren and Derek kept the songs vital and in the spirit of Duane, through improvising and to continuing to push themselves. It has been a privilege to watch their relationship and their dynamic grow, deepen, and change. They are both special and unique players in their own right.

I think that's what the Allman Brothers demands. To be in a band like the Allman Brothers, you have to be willing to push yourself in the moment. You have to be able to think and feel on your feet, with your guitar in your hands. Warren and Derek are certainly both masters of that.

Bruce: What were the Beacon shows like? Tell us how that all came together.

Galadrielle: The Beacon shows were remarkable. It was very emotional for me. It's heartbreaking to have the Allman Brothers band end, but it was a perfect way for them to close it out. The Beacon Theater is a special room that they all felt comfortable in and loved. They have played so many hundreds of shows there, it was really kind of a home for all of us. The families all gathered, and my mom came with me. It was a privilege to see the final shows together.

I think that Warren and Derek would agree that having Duane's guitars there really did deepen and enliven their playing. It was exciting to see them both playing Duane's Les Pauls at the same time. It was very powerful. The guitars' tones still sound like my father. They are his tools.

By the time my father found those guitars, particularly "Hot'Lanta", he really knew what he wanted . He achieved the ideal tone that he was looking for. To hear that sound on stage with the band, playing those songs was pretty magical. I wanted to make sure his guitars were there, as my way of saying goodbye. The Beacon shows have been a big part of my life. of the run was an annual family reunion for me, and was always an incredible musical experience. I feel a little piece of my father is still in this world when I hear his music played live. So it's not easy for me to say goodbye to it, but it couldn't have been a more beauti-

ful ending. The whole band gave everything and left it all on the stage.

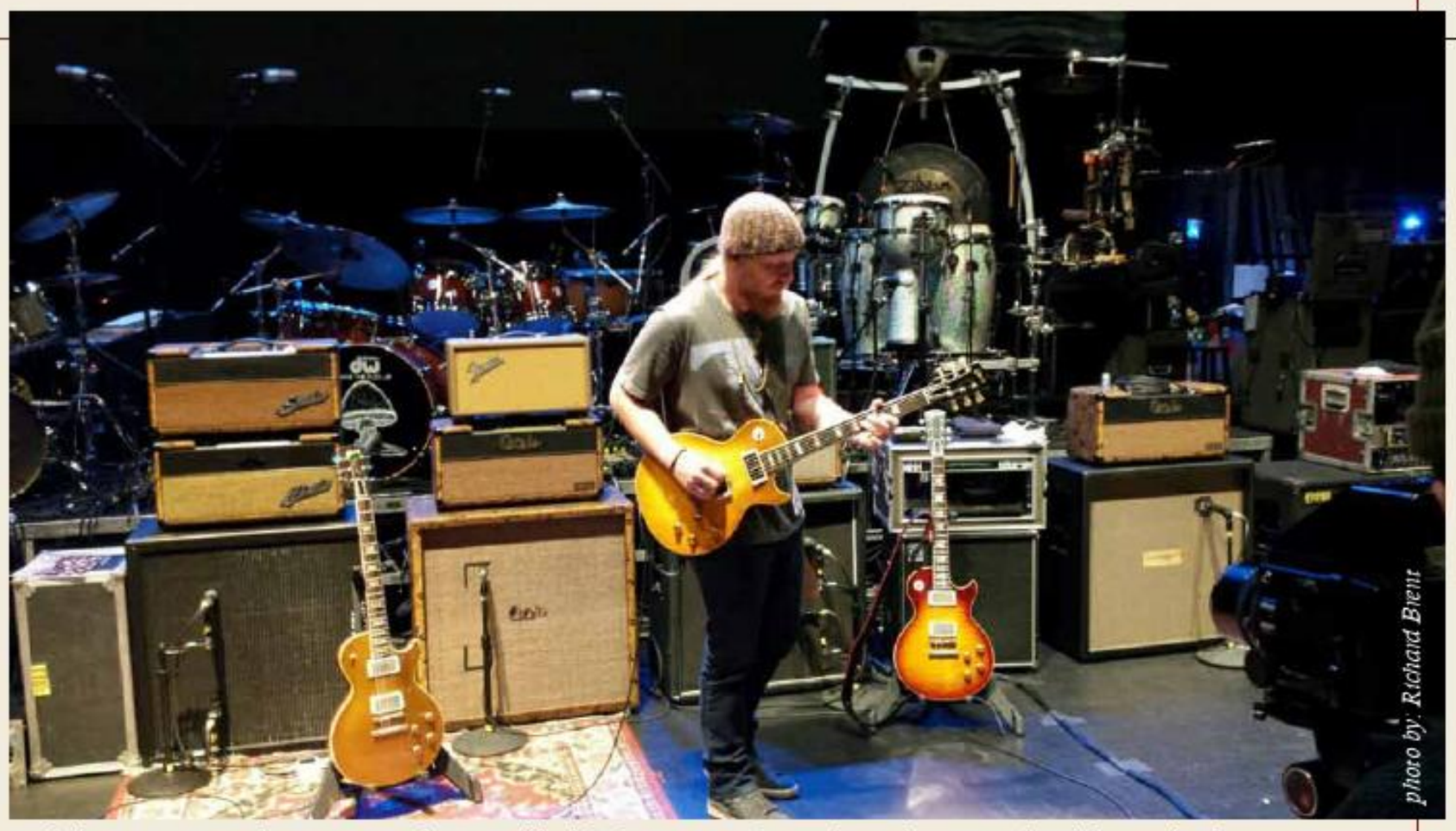
Bruce: Right on! Now, which of the guitars do you actually own?

Galadrielle: I own the Cherry Burst, which is now quite pale and almost looks like the Gold Top. Gibson calls their replicas of it "dirty double lemon". I also own Hot'Lanta, the Tobacco Burst. The Gold Top is the one that got away from me, unfortunately.

Bruce: At the EMP Museum, they have the Tobacco Burst on display, and that's the one that we shot the photos of. What are your plans for the future of those guitars?

Galadrielle: The Cherry Burst is going to be at the Skirball Center, which is a Jewish Cultural Museum in Los Angeles. They are presenting an exhibition about Bill Graham this spring. My father played the Cherry on the live album At Fillmore East, so I thought it would be appropriate. My father and the Allman Brothers Band really loved Bill Graham. He helped break the band by booking them at the Fillmores. The Cherry Burst guitar will be at the Skirball for several years, and I believe the Graham exhibit will also be traveling to a few other affiliated museums as well.

It's important to me that the guitars are protected, but also that they are seen by people. I know how much people want to see them played... and it was amazing to hear them played! I actually loaned the Cherry Burst to Derek for a couple months after the Beacon so that he could spend some time with it. I know guitars are like living, breathing things that need to be played and handled, but they also need to be preserved. I'm open to bringing them back out into the world to be played in special moments by great players. I think that will happen and I'm fine with that. But in terms of long term plans, I want my father's guitars to be treated like the beautiful pieces of music history that they are.



Bruce: I like that idea. That's a nice balance of bringing them out to breathe and make music, and also preserving them for the world to see and appreciate.

Galadrielle: I have to say though, that it was really beautiful to watch Tommy get the guitars ready for the Beacon shows. They went from being dusty and untouched, and then began to glow... it was incredible. You really could see a big difference when he was done, and I am so grateful that Tommy was willing to come all that way to restore them.

Bruce: In closing, how would you like your father to be remembered?

Galadrielle: You know, I couldn't wish any more for my father than he's already earned. Duane is remembered and revered with such devotion. I've really experienced the fans' outpouring of love for my dad this year as I've toured with my book. He would want to be remembered as a player who loved to play. Music was his absolute passion. My father loved other musicians, and was inspired by players in all genres. Duane would want to be remembered as a creative, improvisational, powerful, charismatic player, and I he is remembered that way. It's incredible that in my lifetime, my father has become an icon. He probably wouldn't have wanted to be put on such a high pedestal, but he would be proud. And I am so proud of his legacy.

LEGENDARY GUITAR(IST)

an Interview with Brent Mason

by Roger Sterry / photos by Jimmy Abegg

What makes a guitar a legend? I think we would all agree that in most cases it would be the picker behind the guitar. In many cases the guitar itself is indeed a collectable guitar and sought after, making it "legendary". For the convenience of the reader we have the best of both worlds today. Two legends, the guitars and the picker - Brent Mason. Shall I list all the recordings he's been on? Well my editor keeps a pretty short leash on me and when he gives me an assignment he will say, " I need X amount of words for the article". So If I told you every artist from King George Straight and all the others, the movie scores, the TV commercials, and TV Shows… not only would I use all my "words" up but also I would be way over the limit. So to make it easy on us all, go to Youtube and look at the Music award shows from the 90's to present, when you see a camera shot of the audience, that's basically who has had the honor of having Mr. Mason on their projects. Check out the Grammy shows as well, he is a Grammy winner. (How often does a regular guy get to interview one of his heroes? I am one lucky dude!)

We met for dinner in a little joint on the west end of Nashville. Brent is a cool guy, plain and simple. He's in excellent shape and it certainly defies his age of 55 years. Also, very gracious, we sat down over dinner and it was like two old buddies catching up. Its obvious he's the kind of guy that if he's talking to you, he's not looking over your shoulder looking for someone more important to speak with. He's a regular guy who just happens to be one of the best guitar pickers on the planet. He's lived and is living the dream, from meeting and recording with his heroes like Jerry Reed to being invited into Chet Atkins office and asked to be on Chets "Stay Tuned" project.

Maybe you've never seen him, although he has two solo projects, but you have definitely heard him. In fact you may think that he is just a "country"

guitar picker, but I'm here to tell you the world has heard him pick. It doesn't matter if you never ever listen to country music. There was a show on for a lot of years, I'm sure you've watched back when it was on prime time and now in syndication each night. The show? Friends! And those guitar riffs you here with every intro and outro, well that's Brent Mason.

We talked the night away and this kid from western Ohio (close to Ft. Wayne, Indiana) has stories to tell. But hey the magazine is called "Collectable Guitar" for a reason. The main character is of course Mr. Brent Mason but the two supporting roles for this interview happen to be a 1968 Fender Telecaster, that he got by chance and his own Paul Reed Smith Signature model. May I take this space to thank the Tracking House studio for accommodating us the day after we had dinner so we could take photographs? Thanks to all there for being so gracious, especially when there was a session going on.

As the evening went on we talked about the integrity of music, the current state of country music, the "bro-country" sound, and what he describes as hybrid music, and how country music relates to the regular guy. We pick it up from there…

Roger Sterry: So when did you start picking the guitar?

Brent Mason: I guess I was around nine years old or so, there was this old Spanish style guitar with steel strings, terrible action - couldn't really finger it all that well, but that's what I started on. It was my Grandmas guitar. I would take a table knife and play slide on it. My dad had Ray Charles records. I mean he had all kinds of records… Ernest Tubb, Merle Haggard, Louis Armstrong. In my house we would go from Armstrong to Conway Twitty records. But the Ray Charles country record, with "I Can't Stop Loving You" on it, I played that a lot; I loved it. I used to play along with that one all the time. I really got serious around ten years old. Dad had a lot of Chet records and one day he brought home a Jerry Reed record and that blew me away. I remember asking, "Is that one man or two playing?" and my dad said, "No that's one guy". It just overtook me and that's when it started for me. So I would phonetically break down the album by playing it on slow speeds to figure out the songs.

RS: What was the first song you learned to pick? I asked fully expecting "Wildwood Flower" to be the answer.

BM: Hmmm (thinking) it was probably a Jerry Reed tune when I began to break down the song. It's a little vague, but it was off the Reed album. Probably [he begins to sing] "Oh gal you're mine, you're fine all the time Ba ba Bow Bam Bow. You know it was a thumb-picking thing (as he lays the thumb on his air guitar)

RS: What area of picking, if any, would you say that you desire or have yet to achieve?

BM: That's a tough one, there's a lot I suppose. You know I can't do that Eddie Van Halen stuff and I always liked that, ya know?

RS: Do you have a dream project you would like to do?

BM: Wow! Well sure, listen I've picked with all my heroes, recorded with them, been on thousands of sessions, but yeah, there's always the dream project. A few come to mind. Larry Carlton would be awesome, George Benson just to name a few. Dream Projects, plural, probably don't have just one dream project.

RS: Ok the 1968 Fender Tele, the his-

tory? How did you obtain it?

BM: Well, I was communicating with Paul Franklin (steel guitar player) and I decided to come to Nashville and started to pick up a gig here and there. Paul got me a gig at the Stagecoach Lounge and the bandleader was Don Kelly. So I show up and I had this old Hagstrom guitar, don't know where I got it, {LAUGHS} and were picking and Don says, "You need a Tele". So we went to a place here in Nashville and we saw these teles there, now these are the days you could buy a tele for $400 bucks or so. Don grabbed the Tele which is now mine, and I grabbed a cream colored one, Don's had been stripped and had car primer on it (still that way today). After we played them at a few gigs I played the 68' and Don played mine. I liked his and he liked mine, so we traded and the rest is history. This Tele has been recorded on thousands of sessions.

RS: Did you do any modifications on it?

BM: I did, I couldn't afford to keep more than one guitar at that time, but I needed a Les Paul sound, so I went to Joe Glaser and he put in a humbucker and a single coil for me. So it has that "blend" sound.

RS: What setup do you like?

BM: I like a high action, but not to high. And I just use 10's now, I found that the heavier gauge strings give me a better tone. And I really like the old Fender amps to get the best tone as well. I have a Bassman I really like.

RS: OK the PRS. How did that come to be?

BM: Well, Paul Reed Smith himself had expressed interest in me playing one of his guitars and it really started when we had the big flood here in Nashville a couple of years back. The location where my guitars were stored was submerged at that time. A lot of my guitars were destroyed. I fared better than most, the 68' Tele was at my house so I didn't lose that, but I lost a lot of good ones. There were other people though who lost everything. Anyway, I lost all of my baritone axes and I happened to run into a guy who worked for PRS at the time. I asked if he had a baritone I could use. He did, I used it and that kind of began the relationship to what we have today in the PRS Brent Mason Signature model.

RS: What turned you on to PRS?

BM: Well at first I thought they were just a pretty guitar, cosmetically, you know… great to look at. Then Paul had me visit the factory and I realized, "Man, this guy really builds an incredible guitar". So we designed this guitar. It has a great blend of sounds. You can switch from humbucker, split coil, single coil and never lose power. It fingers great. I do favor the rosewood fretboard but they come in maple as well.

RS: You mentioned "Hybrid Country" define that for me.

BM: Well you know, I guess searching for identity. It's a mix of all kinds of music, we'll hear some rap and other things. Stuff like that.

RS: Back in the day we would hear Ernest Tubb say, "Here's Leon and Buddy" and they would take their breaks and we would all expect it. We all waited for Bobby and Sonny Osborne to take their instrument solos, the instruments were as much of the song as the lyrics. Does "Hybrid country" take some of that away?

BM: That's a good point, and I guess that's kind of true, it's certainly not near the feature as it used to be. And steel guitar players are finding less and less work as well. We need to remember at the end of the day its business and what sells is what we are going to play.

RS; We have "bro" or hybrid country today. What's the big difference from yesterday's country?

BM: Listen, music is always changing, and that's good. I think when you take a Haggard song, or Cash or Jackson or Strait… Marty Stuart is another one… those songs were songs you could feel and relate to, they spoke to us. And after 40-50 years we are still singing them. They stick with us. I think that's the greatest difference.

RS: Has the current state of music adjusted your picking at all. Is it tough to come up with new stuff?

BM: No, not really, I mean that's what I do.

You can have Brent Mason on a recording of yours. Just go to www.brentmason.com and go to your nearest Paul Reed Smith dealer and grab a Brent Mason Signature model today. Trust me, these guitars pick themselves.

Just a quick note to Brent's beautiful wife Julie. When Brent left the house she told him "make sure you don't say 'you know' every other word". Well, I have it all on tape and he didn't. :)

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PRODUCT REVIEW

Takamine LTD-2015

by Paul Genovese

We sat down with Paul Genovese, a session player in the Boston studio scene since back in the 1960's. Now living in the Bay Area, Paul enjoys a Northern California lifestyle, with too many guitars and not enough time to play them all.

We wanted to test drive the new Takamine LTD-2015. Every year Takamine releases a limited edition highly crafted guitar… the flagship of the line so to speak. So we placed it in Paul's capable hands and asked him to play it for a good while and tell us what he thinks…

Paul Genovese:

This Takamine LTD-2015 is set-up perfectly and plays very well. The fret-work is impeccable. The guitar feels lively as the top vibrates freely. It's intonation is spot-on and the harmonics ring true. From the nut thru the 12th fret and beyond to the compensated saddle, it's perfectly done, including the neck angle to the saddle. The peghead angle adds just the right amount of tension over the nut.

Sonically, it's balanced. None of the strings dominate. It sounds nice & warm throughout the registers. It has just enough brightness on the high E & B to balance out the lower strings. And to my surprise it has "big volume".

Cosmetically, the finish is flawless. Black is hard to do very well and this model is pitch black and elegant looking. This Takamine color should be called "Steinway Black." The pickguard is a subtly different tone of black to the eye… a creative touch. The inlay of the Japanese RENGE-SO flowers are delicately and intricately done. The pattern is lovely. By the way, the black hardware; strap pin, output jack and machine heads with white pearloid buttons all add to the elegance.

The playability of this guitar has some electric guitar kind of properties. It plays incredibly easy. Not to mention that it's easy to feel movement and vibrations all over the instrument. Playing a diminished chord in the first position is not something I would normally choose to do because it's too hard to press down the strings so close to the nut (which is 1&11/16" by the way). But on this guitar, I didn't have to work hard to do it. It's playability covers a lot of styles. I added a capo at the second fret and I got lots' of jazzy qualities. Fingerstyle acoustic players will enjoy it. It's sounded warm with a shine to it.

Acoustic-electrically, it is surprising how much control the player has to shape the sound. Mixing it with your vocals is easy. The evenness of the guitar's voice makes it simple to dial in the player/singer's vocal style. My jazz tunes also dialed in easily. You can bring in the low end to just the right amount utilizing the tube the preamp mix and speaking of the "cool tube" system… it can warm up any sound you make!

On top of all this, the guitar's body has good percussive capabilities as well which is a plus for a solo player like me… another asset. The bottom line… if you need a certain sound - Voila' - it's all there!

The MSPR is $4,999.99

Takamine Guitars has just partnered with its new U.S.A. distributor, ESP Guitar Company. To find out where you can get your hands on one of these LTD-2015 models, please visit www.takamine.com or contact Jeff@espguitars.com for more information.

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~Martin's 000-18 Marquis~

It all started with an 1898 Martin single 0 given to my family by a friend upon her passing. The guitar was over 100 years old at that point and it looked every year of it. If we'd decided to keep it the reasons would have been nostalgic rather than musical, and our various households having both big dogs and little kids, we decided to sell this lovely, delicate old thing.

It did not take long to find a buyer and, in the end, we netted around $8,000. Now, this felt like free money, so my mother and I decided to treat it that way. The next question became how best to spend our windfall. Two new guitars for the price of one very old guitar sounds good, right?

Our family friend who happens to be a prolific finger-style guitar player Stevie Coyle owns a beautiful boutique guitar shop in Lafayette, CA, called Mighty Fine Guitars. He focuses mainly on hand-built guitars by makers like Sexauer, Goodall, Ryan etc., but he frequently has a small but impressive selection of Martins in stock. In the end my mom found a pretty Martin Custom Shop model and I accidentally struck gold.

I took home a 2009 000-18 Marquis with a sunburst finish. At the time I thought I had acquired a GE or "Golden Era" model, which is among my favorite lines. Guitars from this series are exact copies of guitars from the 1930's. More specifically, the 000-18 GE is an exact copy of a 000-18 from 1937. As you may have noticed, I bought a 000-18 Marquis, not a 000-18 GE but I had understood that it was "from the Golden Era Family". As it turns out the 000-18 GE became a highly coveted model and rightly so, it is comfortable, beautiful and it has a transcendent melancholy tone. It was so revered, in fact, that the rest of the world got jealous and overseas buyers understandably wanted in on the action. Sadly, though, CITES reared its ugly head, and the faceplate of the headstock of the 000-18 GE being made of Brazilian Rosewood made shipment out of the country ill-advised, to say the very least. Martin heard these cries, however, and came up with a solution: a new version of the guitar in which everything is exactly the same as the GE, but with a with a Madagascar Rosewood faceplate. Boom; problem solved. Behold, the 000-18 Marquis.

Now, the GE version is considered a low-production model at 1,244 guitars which certainly qualifies it as a potentially collectable and valuable instrument. It is a full "production" model (as apposed to a Custom Shop or Signature Series). It is considered high-end, and people love it. And because Martin isn't making any more, people will always love it.

It gets even better. If the 000-18 GE is potentially collectable, consider the Marquis … same guitar (almost) but Martin only made 42 of them! Then consider that it was built with out-of-the-country shipping in mind.

But before I tell you how this story gets better yet, I'll tell you how I came to know all of this. After a few months with my Marquis I decided to do a little Google-ing to find out whatever I could about my guitar. I'll bet you've done the same thing with yours. Problem was, I couldn't find anything at all. No other owners, none for sale, no reviews, just nothing. So I decided to call the Martin Guitar factory directly. A great guy named Jason answered the phone and made my day. He was amazed that I had a 000-18 Marquis at all, Jason told me that mine was number 9 of 42, 1 of 21 with a sunburst finish (exact replica of the 1937 burst), and then he said that 11 out of the 20 000-18 Marquis sunbursts were shipped out of the country (20 of the 42 total were shipped) and that means that right now, as you read this, there are only 12 of these guitars in the US! A full production model, a high end, coveted Martin guitar and there are only 12 of them in America. What do you want to bet that the other 11 owners haven't a clue as to what they have? Kind of makes you hope they read this article...

I know that sound is everything and that we don't buy guitars to collect them, we buy them to play music… but, I mean there is only 12 of them! Knowing what I know about this guitar and considering it isn't my only guitar, I doubt I'll play it as much as it deserves. I'll just store it in a cave… move in with it and name it My Precious.

Guitar lovers, I give you the 000-18 Marquis - the already collectible guitar.

Josh Isaacs is a photographer based in the Bay Area. Josh lives in Pleasant Hill CA with his wife and their son.

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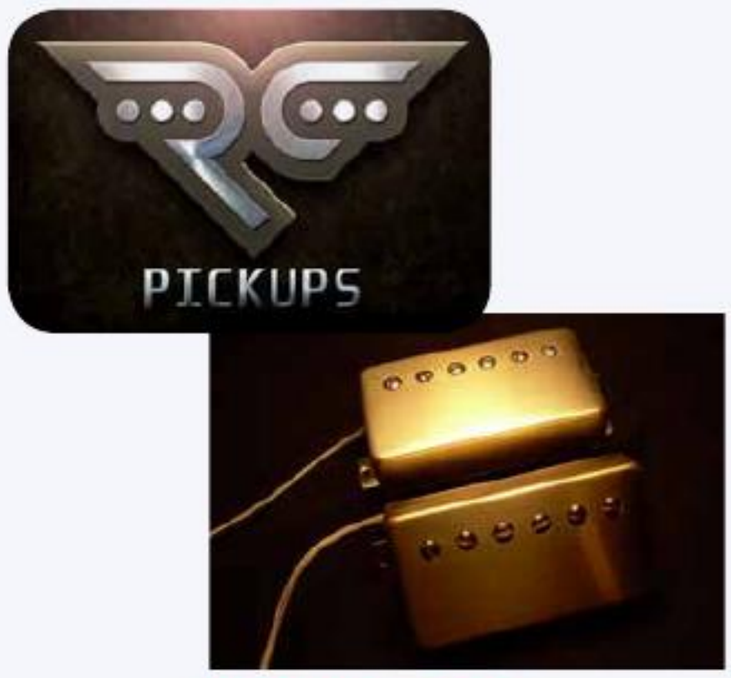

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THE FRETBOARD LESS TRAVELED

by Rich Severson

The Dominant 7th Bebop Scale

If you're searching for a new concept to give your playing that old school sound, this might help. You will hear this scale played by some of the early rockabilly and jazz players. A bebop scale is simply an eight note scale created by adding an extra ½ step between one of the notes. Now there are several scale "flavors", in this issue we are going to look at the Dominant 7th Bebop Scale. Here's its makeup. For these examples we will use the key of "C". Start with a Dominant 7th scale or Mixolydian mode, whichever you want to call it.

C D E F G A Bb C > now add an extra ½ step between the b7 & Root (Bb & C)
R 2 3 4 5 6 b7 R

C D E F G A Bb B C > Voila, now you have a Dominant 7th Bebop Scale
R 2 3 4 5 6 b7 7 R

The idea of an eight note scale sounds easy but like everything, it's more difficult to actually execute. Here's the challenge; improvise over a blues progression in the key of C in an up-tempo shuffle feel but only use the notes of the bebop scale. No flat 5s, no flatted 3rds from the blues scale and avoid all the cliché blues licks. The sound is refreshingly new, umm I mean old.

Go to 99CentGuitarLessons.com and click the Blues button and select the Jazzy Blues Solos. There you will find a video lesson of this crafted solo using just the bebop scale over a blues progression in "C" to be played in an up-tempo shuffle style. There is also one that demonstrates the bebop scale and teaches you licks using that scale. Even just hearing the lesson demos will help you get it down. Work to get it up to tempo and you'll be pleasantly surprised at how refreshing an old sound can be.

Till next time,

Rich

Rich Severson, guitarist, clinician, author, band director, former GIT instructor.
To preview Rich's music and guitar educational products go to www.GuitarCollege.com and www.99CentGuitarLessons.com

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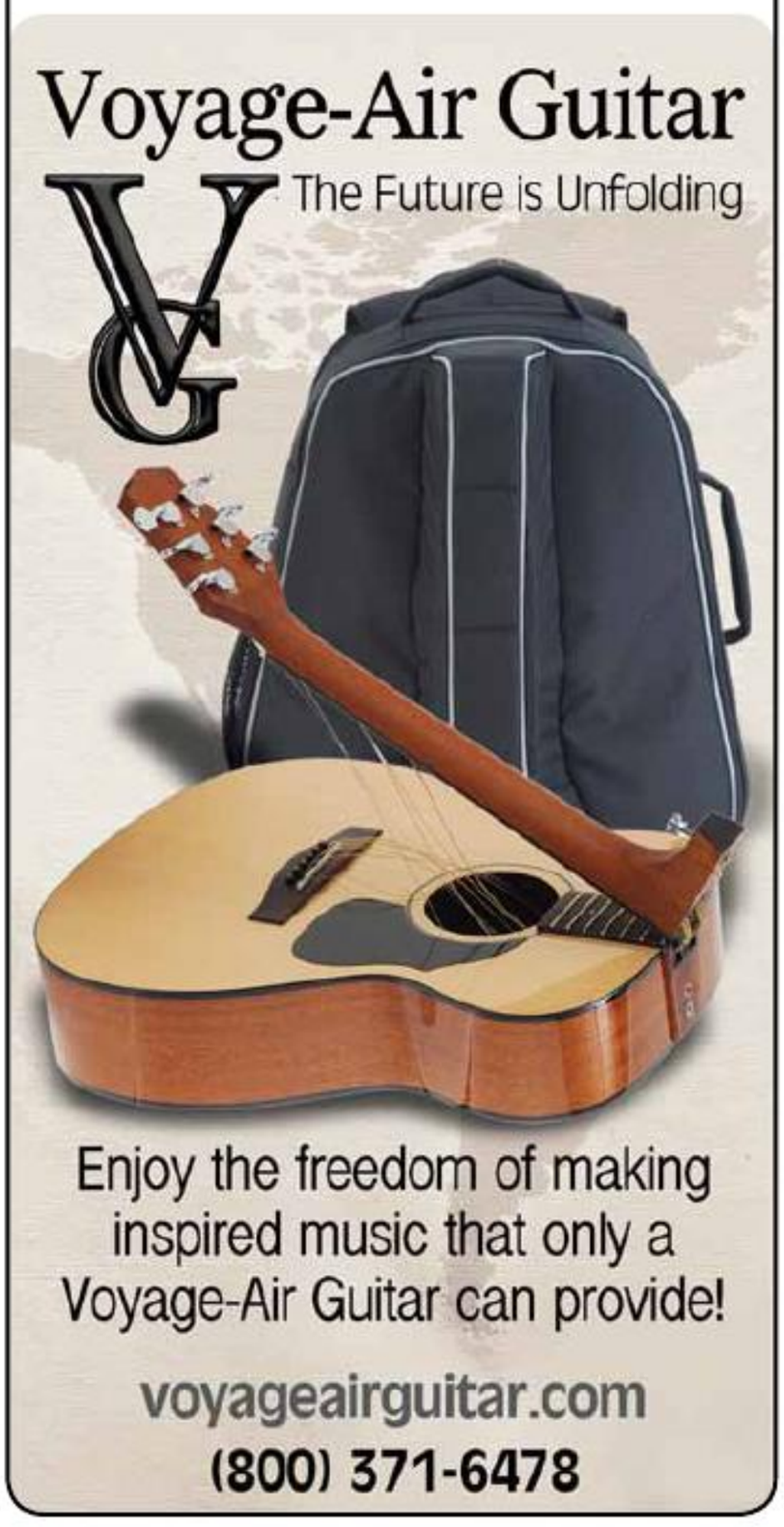
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Whitfill Custom Guitars

by Eric Dahl

Charles Whitfill built his first guitar when he was just 18 years old and in his own words, "It was unplayable." But through the years he continued to build instruments on the side, while maintaining his day job as a corporate executive (with a background as a tool & die maker). He first found success while building F5 style mandolins that were sought out by local musicians, but the problem was the amount of time invested in building the instruments pushed the price too high. Around this same time Charles began repairing instruments and dealing in vintage guitars and amplifiers. Approximately four years ago as Whitfill puts it, "My corporate gig played out, so I started relicing instruments and doing guitar rebuilds". After determining he could build better guitars than the ones he was repairing, Charles began building guitars from scratch. A few local musicians started buying and playing his instruments but he only built six to eight guitars a year at that point. Charles credits Brian Wampler, owner of Wampler guitar pedals, for helping to put him on the map when Brian was searching for a great tele style guitar to test his pedals out with. This led to Wampler inviting Whitfill to his first Namm Show in the summer of 2013. Charles took time out of his busy guitar building schedule to elaborate with us on the details of Whitfill Custom Guitars.

Eric: Charles, thank you for taking the time to talk with Collectible Guitar Magazine. So what happened at that first Namm show that brought more attention to your guitars?

Charles: Well, Vince Gill showed up at the Wampler Booth and liked the feel of my guitars but didn't want to play them there. He came back by later and said honestly he just didn't want pictures and videos of him coming out playing them. Six months later Vince was playing a show up in Louisville, Kentucky and invited me to the show and ends up playing my guitar on stage.

Eric: We first met at the Nashville Amp Show a few years ago, but your instruments are even better now and have become much more popular... why?

Charles: I have learned more about tone and finishes now than I knew then. The same tonal properties that apply to mandolins also apply to electric guitars. Pickups are only part of the equation... it's the wood!

Eric: How many staff do you employee and how many guitars are you making?

Charles: The only other employee I have, Robert Powell, is disabled and can only work part-time. His primary expertise is realistically relicing my hardware for each instrument! He is a great guitarist, so I feel one of his biggest contributions is playing every guitar so I can listen to if it has the "magic" sound. At this time we are building about seven or eight guitars per month.

Eric: What amplifiers do you sound check your guitars through before they go out?

Charles: We test every guitar through all of these amps before we sign off on them: VVT Amp, Little Walter 50, some old vintage Fender amps, a Morris and a Tone King. If we don't like the sound of the guitar then we may take off the neck and try another or scrap the body and start from scratch.

Eric: What are the different models that you currently offer?

Charles: The standard "T" style guitar that you can get with humbuckers or P90's, the "Slim line" with two humbuckers and some "S" Style guitars, but the "T" and "Slim line" are the biggest sellers.

Eric: After demoing one of your "T" Style guitars I was impressed with the fit finish, tonal properties and the attention to detail (like the use of flat head screws) throughout but most of all your finishes are amazing. How do you achieve the natural looking checking that gives the perception of a vintage instrument?

Charles: It was a lot of trial and error and a lot of practice. I tried a number of different products and processes until I achieved what you see now.

Eric: What kind of pickups are you using, they have a very warm tone to them?

Charles: They are hand wound for Whitfill Custom Guitars and are proprietary to my instruments. If someone asks me to buy a set of the pickups I tell them I'll sell them the pickups for $2,750 and throw in a guitar for free.

Eric: How do you make your guitars so light compared to other similar guitar makers?

Charles: I have various sources for my wood and I pay more for better wood so that I can do one piece bodies. I buy the wood by weight, tap it with a hammer to check the tone and pay a premium price to get it!

Eric: Who are some of the current endorsers of your guitars?

Charles: I really don't have endorsees, just people that like them and play them. Currently Vince Gill, Kenny Vaughn (Marty Stuart & his Fabulous Superlatives), Peter Frampton, Adam Lester, Warren Haynes and Johnny Hiland are some popular musicians playing them. I have an order in from Billy Gibbons but we're still working out the details on his guitar.

Eric: What do you see in the future for your guitar company?

Charles: If I were asked to write a script of the perfect job on earth – I'm doing it. That's a big, big questions and I'm not sure. I would like to hire a few more people but I still want to have my hands on every guitar I sell. I'm not going to do things factory style, although a few of the right guys helping out would be nice.

Eric: What is the history of Lebanon, Kentucky where you're building guitars?

Charles: Most of the bourbon in the world is produced within fifty miles from where I am at. This became a stop for the Chitlin' Circuit back in the day and big performers like Ike & Tina Turner and even Jimi Hendrix used to play at the Club Cherry. I always tell people I hang my guitars in the old Club Cherry to soak up some of that Mojo. You can find out more about this area in the book "Cornbread Mafia".

Eric: Do you feel your guitars will be collectible in the future like the instruments you once dealt in?

Charles: I just do what I do and people seem to love it. I sign and date every guitar just as an artist would a painting. My thought is, that guitars that are sought after, built in limited quantities, and no two are exactly the same, would surely increase in value as time passes.

The review model that was sent to me was reminiscent of a vintage 52 T style with its checked blonde finish and relic'd hardware. It played and sounded great and was surprisingly light for an instrument of this design, but still had great sustain unplugged and plugged in.

Whitfill Custom Guitars can be purchased direct online at www.whitfillcustomguitars.com or through his current distributor Destroy All Guitars. The starting price is $2,750 and any custom additions are an extra charge, a hard shell case is included.

Road Gold: Univox Coily

by Michael Elsner

Last May I was wrapping up a tour with an artist who I'd be playing with for a little over a year. It was our last run, and we had 3 final shows in Florida. On the second day the bus pulled into Jacksonville around noon and we each went straight to our hotel rooms for a few hours. When I got into mine, I flipped on the TV, fired up the WiFi, and as I usually do in every new town, started looking through the local craigslist ads for a few minutes. I typed my 'go to' keywords into the search field, and came across an ad with the headline "Vintage 1960's Univox Coily Hollowbody".

Anything vintage and from the 60's always grabs my attention, so I clicked on the link, saw the photo, and immediately fell in love with this guitar. The photo showed a hollow body with an amazing purple/red/pink sunburst finish. I'd heard of Univox guitars, yet I wasn't all that familiar with the brand as a whole, but after seeing the image, I knew I had to at least respond to the ad.

Being unfamiliar with the value or history of Univox, I immediately started doing some research and reading up on the company. The first thing I wanted to do was figure out what year this guitar could possibly be from. In doing my research, I learned that Univox changed their headstock logo in 1970 from a plastic one to a block lettering decal. The guitar in the photo had the block lettering, so at that point I knew it was not a 1960's model, as the owner believed. From what I could tell, it was a very early 70's model.

The next thing I did was get on eBay to see some of the recently completed listings for Univox Coily guitars in order to get a better perspective of its going rate. I chose a price that I felt was fair, and sent an e-mail to the owner, mentioning that I was interested, but that I was only in town for one night. I made an offer quite a bit lower than his asking price, with the intention of negotiating up to my intended price, and I also included in my e-mail the statement, "It looks like a 70's model. Univox changed their logo from a plastic logo to the block lettering decal in 1970". I wanted him to know what he had so he could research it a little better and not think I was some jerk low-balling him.

Surprisingly, this was probably the easiest negotiation ever. Within 10 minutes, I received an e-mail back accepting my offer, and the owner even said he would bring it to the venue later that night.

We scheduled to meet up around 6pm, and he arrived with his wife to make the sale. Upon opening the case, I discovered that the guitar was in excellent condition, aside from just needing a good cleaning and restringing. The neck was straight, but the strings were so old and dull that even attempting to tune it and check the intonation was a pointless endeavor. I wasn't able to bring it on stage and check it through an amp at that time, but everything looked great and I took him at his word that the electronics worked. At the price I was paying, I couldn't really argue even if they weren't working.

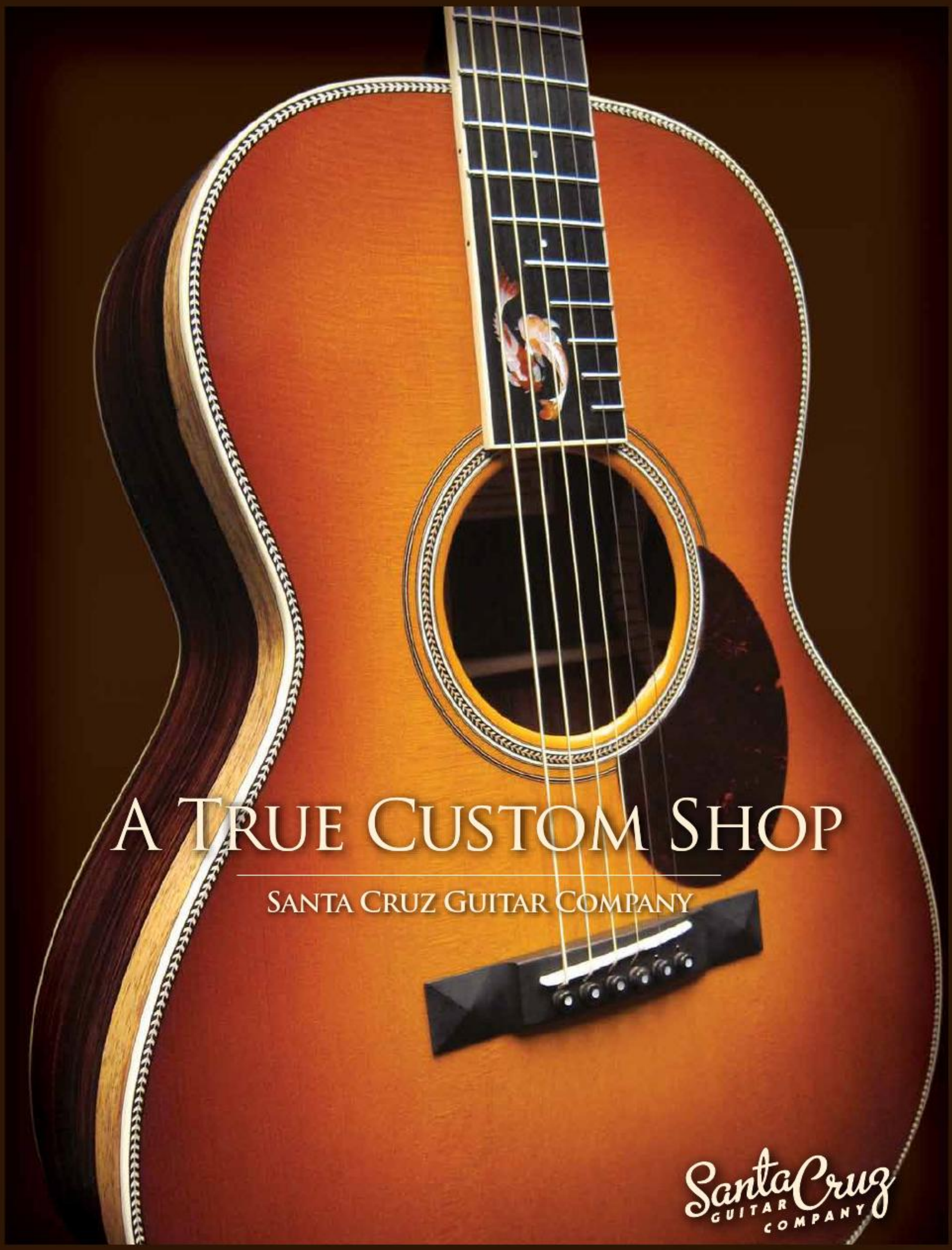
It was also during this exchange and subsequent conversation, that I realized why I was able to get such a good deal. His wife had pretty much mandated that it was time to start "thinning out of his gear collection" and she had no problem making that fact known.

The next day we were in Orlando and being that it's only a two hour ride, I had plenty of time to clean and re-string the guitar. At the end of sound check I wanted to hear what it sounded like through my rig. I was blown away. Not only myself, but the other guys in the band were also pretty shocked at how good it sounded! The previous owner took good care of it, so the intonation was almost perfect, and its playability and action were superb.

Over the next few months, I ended up using this guitar on about 30% of the new virtual instrument "Apollo: Cinematic Guitars" released by Vir2 Instruments as well as the vast majority of the new SonicTremor release "Swagger." In fact, much of Swagger's sound was dictated by the interaction of this guitar with a fuzz pedal and 60's Fender amp.

Now, this guitar is by no means a high dollar collector's guitar, and some may argue that it's not even a collectible guitar, but it was something that aesthetically caught my eye, and at the right price I knew it would make a nice addition to my collection. It turned out to be an incredible sounding guitar, a real joy to play, and frankly, it just looks so cool. I love having it in my studio and on hand, and it's been a big source of inspiration this last year as I've worked on a number of projects. For me, as a guitar enthusiast and collector, that's the most important aspect, and it's always a thrill to find these pieces of gold out on the road!

Michael Elsner is a guitarist/songwriter/producer whose written for shows including American Idol, Amish Mafia, EXTRA, The Sing Off, and So You Think You Can Dance among many others.
www.michaelelsner.com



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PEDAL SNAPSHOT

by Phil Traina

After getting back from winter NAMM in Anaheim California, I was so excited to write about these two pedals. First the Royal Overdrive by Van Weelden is one of the hardest to get and coolest preamp drive pedals around. The Flight time delay by Free the Tone is one of the most talked about pedals at the NAMM show. Yuki and his team are making great stuff.

The Royal Overdrive by Van Weelden
$599EU

Peter Van Weelden has been building amps for years. Most of the amps he builds are based off of the Dumble style amps of the 70's and 80's. Van Weelden is most noted for having his Twinkleland amp (based on a Dumble Overdrive Special) played by Joe Bonamassa. The Royal Overdrive is based off of that amp. The Royal OD was over 4 years in the making and has well over 400 parts. This is truly an amp in a box. At first glance, the Royal is pretty simply laid out, it has a full EQ section, bass, mid and treble, followed by a gain, presence and master volume. I must say the versatility of the Royal is amazing. There is a mode switch that will help you dial in your guitars whether they are humbucker or single coils. The 3 way bright switch lets the Royal be used across different platforms of amp. Many preamp style pedals play nice with only certain styles of amps. Not the Royal, it was equally as good in front of an EL84 based AC style amp as it was to a 6L6 based Fender style. I even ran it through a Quilter Toneblock Class D solid-state amp. The results were just as good as the tubes. The gain boost switch adds another gain stage and really sets your tone on fire. Lastly the mid boost stomp switch helps cut through the mix with the addition of some more midrange.

I really enjoyed playing this pedal. There are so many tones. The Royal can run on 9v, 12v or 18v DC power. At 18v the headroom and harmonic content gets richer and more defined. It's not your average Dumble style pedal. I got some of the most harmonically rich cleans. I have only heard tones like this out of some of the great boutique amps I've played. The Royal overdrive's distortion tones are second to none. I had to remind myself that this was a pedal. Which brings me to the "feel". It is hard to articulate how an amp feels versus how a pedal feels. The only way I can relate it is, the Royal gives it right back to you. There is a push and pull and sensitivity that comes with an overdrive of this stature. I coaxed great Marshall-ey pushed cleans and rocking AC/DC style grind. The notes jumped and leap off of the fretboard and out of the speakers. I wanted to keep playing. The notes flipping into controlled feedback even on clean tones were unreal. The sustain in your notes would linger forever if you wanted them too. The Royal let my fingers do the taking. The availability is limited and the price is pretty hefty, that would be my only concerns. Overall the Van Weelden Royal overdrive is a winner.

www.vanweelden.com

Free The Tone Flight Time Delay
$430USD

Yuki and the team at Free the Tone have created something really special for the delay junkies out there. At first glance the Flight Time looks like a militaristic cockpit of a high-tech fighter jet. The Free the Tone camp wanted to create a delay that was user friendly and had the features today's guitar player wanted. A couple things set the Flight Time apart from the herd of digital delays out there today. First is the fact that most delays sound like a pedal. Rack mount delays like the 2290 were so popular because the preserved the analog tone so beautifully. The original guitar tone was left intact. The way most pedal digital delays work is the analog sound is converted to digital thus changing the overall tone. Yuki of Free the Tone figured out how to keep the feel of the coveted rack delays in a pedal format. One of my favorite features is he BPM analyzer. There is an external mic that can hear the tempo and adjust the timing accordingly. It is great when the drummer rushes or lags behind the beat. The other functions are set up very user friendly. Delay, Feedback and Out, that is pretty straight forward. The filtering and modulation is where this pedal shines. There are two filters, a Hi pass and a Low pass, as well as Rate and Depth for modulation. I was able to set up my repeats to be extremely close to one of my favorite delays, a vintage Memory Man. The main difference in the Flight Time was it was quiet. Other features on the digital readouts are subdivisions of the repeats as well as the 99 presets. The Flight Time comes loaded with 10 presets and they are all useable. The tap tempo stomp switch functions as a toggle, up for preset options and the bypass switch functions as the down. I found that in a live situation if you switch between multiple presets having an external switch to navigate the presets and using the Flight Time in tap tempo mode was optimal. Running it using the presets with MIDI was seamless. The Flight Time is not a stereo delay, so if you are looking for that function this may not be for you. Other than that, the Free the Tone camp has come up with one of the coolest most versatile delay pedals to be seen in a while.

www.freethetone.com

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Wanted Dead or Alive

by Norman Harris

In the early 80's I was trying to find clever way to obtain quality guitars. I would constantly drive from music stores, to pawn shops, to thrift shops. I would try to get every newspaper as early as possible in order to be the first in line to purchase fine guitars. Don't forget, this was before the Internet became a factor. There were also no fax machines. Music stores, thrift shops and pawn shops were the only avenues other than newspapers and word of mouth to find great guitars. I began running ads in various newspapers in hopes of getting a great phone call. One afternoon I received such a call from a man saying he had a guitar to sell. I asked my usual questions, trying to determine if I was going to go out and travel across Southern California to buy guitar or if the call was going to be bust.

The man said his name was Bob and he had an old Stratocaster for sale. In my ad in the Los Angeles Times it read, "Wanted Dead or Alive: Fender, Gibson, Martin Guitars". My ad did not mention other brands. Bob lived in the Long Beach area, about an hour from my home. When he read me the serial number of the Stratocaster and told me it was in like new condition that was enough to get me in my car and on the way to Long Beach. I have always been pretty excitable and this was plenty to get me excited.

When I arrived at Bob's house, Bob greeted me and invited me into the room that housed the Stratocaster. I saw a beautiful brown case lying on the couch. I couldn't wait to see what was inside. When Bob opened the case I was amazed to see one of the cleanest slab board Stratocasters I had ever seen. Bob quoted me a price and after minimal negotiation, I had purchased the guitar. I was not about to play hardball. When I saw the guitar, I was determined to purchase it if the price was anywhere in the ballpark. This was in the early 80's, even though the price of the guitar seemed so high at the time, by today's standards it seems like nothing.

I wanted to grab the guitar and leave before Bob had seller's remorse, but before I could leave Bob said, "I have something else to show you." He reached into his closet and pulled out another guitar case. This was a big case, so I was able to determine it had to be an arch top or some type of jumbo flat top acoustic. When Bob popped the case open he revealed to me a gorgeous

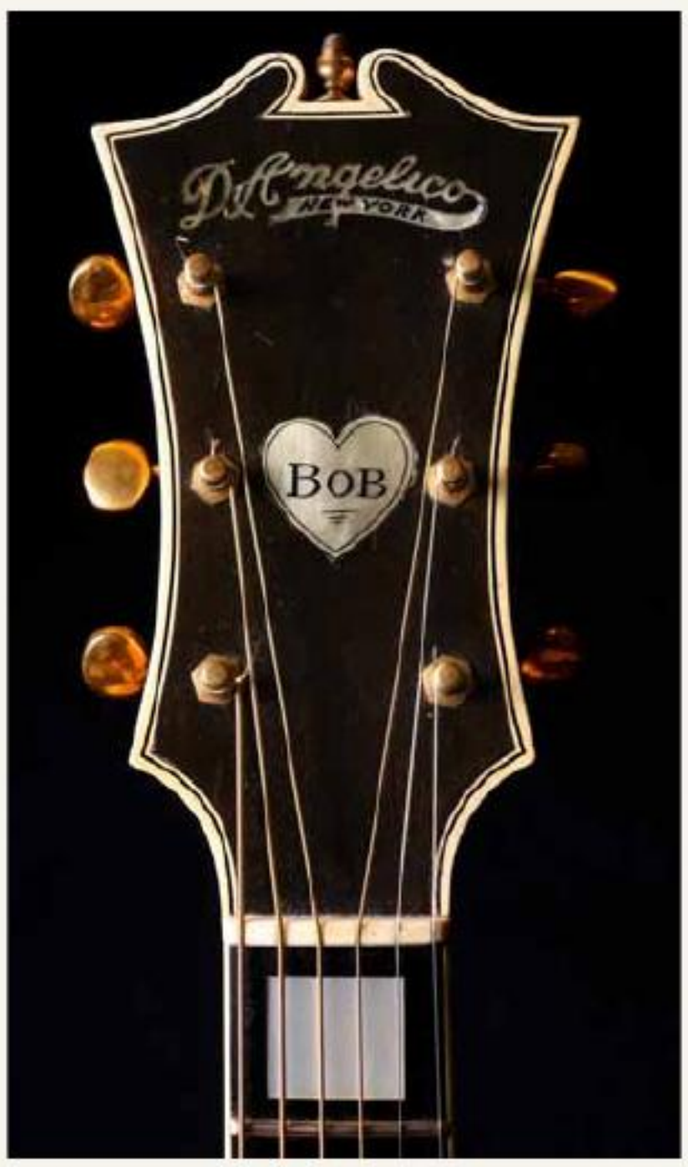
blonde D'Angelico Excel guitar. The guitar was slightly golden in color and the wood on the back of the guitar was quite psychedelic. The flame maple on the back was heavily figured and I was completely floored.

When I noticed the headstock, the inlay was different from any Excel I had ever seen. It was heart shaped and the name Bob appeared in the center of the inlay. I looked at Bob and he said that it was custom made for him on his 13th birthday. Bob also told me that John D'Angelico was his uncle and he received the guitar as a gift. Bob said he was no longer playing and that he was happy to sell the guitar to someone who would appreciate the guitar and to someone who was aware of his uncle.

Once again with little negotiating I was able to make a deal on the guitar. Bob was quite happy and so was I. I was thrilled to be an owner of such a fine instrument. I asked Bob, "How come you didn't mention this guitar on the phone before I came to your house?" Bob said, "In your ad, you only mentioned wanting Fender, Gibson and Martin guitars".

Best wishes, Norman

Norman Harris is owner of Norman's Rare Guitars in Tarzana, CA. He is also author of "Norman's Rare Guitars" Book (a must have for every collector). Be on the look out as Norman is working hard on his second book scheduled for release mid 2015.



PRODUCT REVIEW

Hotone Legacy "British Invasion"amp

by Jack Mao

The diminutive "British Invasion" amp shown here is a 5W Class AB guitar amplifier head designed to recreate the tonal characteristics of a VOX AC30 at low volume.The amp's dimensions are 128mm (W) x 75mm (D) x 59.5mm (H) and it weighs just440 Grams.The Amp features an effects loop and has a 1/8th aux input for running a CD or MP3 player through it. The amp is more than capable of serving up some great guitar tones suitable for both live and recording situations.

I know I've spent hours trying to get that perfect recording tone - the usual problem is (in my home studio anyway) that it's nearly impossible to do so without cranking up my amp to the point where the whole exercise is self-defeating both from volume and sound isolation standpoint. The Hotone Legacy "British Invasion" amp addresses this problem by allowing you to dial a loud sound without actually being loud. It takes a little trial and error to get the best sound out of the tone stack (the gain stage is surprisingly responsive) but once you get the hang of it, the amp really does sound great. The Hotone Legacy "British Invasion" amp has the capability to self-switch from 4, 8 or 16 Ohm speaker Cabinets automatically. This is a great feature that allows you to run the amp through just about any speaker configuration you could think of – ideal for a variety of recording situations.

The Hotone Legacy "British Invasion" sounded great through the amp's matching 4.5" speaker cabinet all the way up to my 4x10 main stage amp (just be sure to use a high quality speaker cable). Depending on the size of the cabinet, the amp is also plenty loud for a lot of live venues like churches or small clubs, especially when mic'd through a PA.

Hotone won a "Best of Show" at this year's NAMM Show, and this product is only one of a couple of such form factors currently available on the market. The price is right - currently $99.99 on Amazon.

Hotone amps come in a variety of different tonal configurations.

See http://www.hotoneaudio.com/products/nanolegacy/74.html for more information.

Earthquaker Devices Park Fuzz Sound

by Doug Doppler

One of the things I love most about Earthquaker Devices is that they constantly come out with new stuff that is every bit as unexpected and amazing as that which has come before.

The Park Fuzz Sound is a collaboration between Earthquaker Devices, and Park Amplfication, recently resurrected by amp and industry guru Mitch Colby. The goal was to match the organic amp-like fuzz quality of the original, but add a few enhancements here and there, and I have to say they've done a brilliant job.

As a bit of background, Park Amplifiers was founded by the late Jim Marshall so he could sell his amps to stores that his Marshall distribution network would have otherwise prevented. The various Park Amplifiers circuits remain highly prized, including the Fuzz Sound, which according to Earthquaker Devices owner/designer Jamie Stillman was extremely close to the Tone Bender III.

Compared to the original, the new pedal offers a number of useful improvements. The 4 5/8" x 2 1/2" footprint and standard power requirements (9 volt DC power with a negative center 2.1mm barrel or a 9v battery) make it pedal board friendly. The hand picked pair of NOS germanium transistors were meticulously selected to replicate the tone and responsiveness of the original. While the circuit remains very close to the original, the amount of fuzz on tap is nearly double, resulting in a fuzz-laden trip down memory lane.

Noting the Jamie tends to design circuits that are intended to sound groovy with the controls at high noon when played through a clean amp, this is definitely a great place to start. There are lots of gooey rhythm and lead tones here as you switch between pickups and instruments. Backing off on the volume controls causes the pedal to clean up nicely, allowing you to get a great range of classic tones. Add a Disaster Transport delay pedal and things get really groovy. You can actually play a Strat in the bridge position with everything at high noon and not have to run for cover – nice!

As you increase the amount of fuzz goodness the volume increases as well, which can easily be rectified via the Volume control. I also found the pedal got incrementally brighter as I increased the Fuzz, and backing off on the Tone control did a great job of removing the brightness, sans any "blanket effect". Stillman noted that the place he tends to hang out on the Fuzz control is about 3:00 and he encourages people to try that before diming the Fuzz all the way. This delivers a ton of fuzzalicious rhythm and lead tones, and chances are this is where most people will want to "live" with this pedal.

That said, cranking the Fuzz control all the way delivers one of the sweetest vintage lead tones I've come across in a long time. Whether you're a Bad Company fan or not, the lead tone on "Feel Like Making Love" is nothing short of iconic and cranking the Fuzz and setting the Tone control between 2:00 and 3:00 delivers that tone in spades – especially if you add some vintage flavored delay. Were talking big, long, sweet, sustaining notes that just love to bloom into the kind of feedback you wish you could end every solo with.

In conclusion, whether you're a fuzz fanatic, vintage tone freak, or simply curious about yet another hand-built pedal of goodness from the folks at Earthquaker Devices, the Park Fuzz Sound definitely hits the spot!

$175.00

EarthquakerDevices.com

When Doug Doppler is not writing gear reviews, the former Guitar Hero session player and Favored Nations recording artist spends his days, hours, weeks and years demoing the coolest gear on the planet for his web site GearTunes.com.

The Business of Guitar Collecting

(from the least qualified collector)

by Roger Sterry

Ok so the title will probably make you say, "If the writer isn't giving himself any credibility why should I care what he says". Please read on.

So am I a collector? Yes! I have a pretty good collection of thirty or so guitars and they are worth a good bit. Gibsons, Gretsch, Taylors, Fenders, Martins and the list goes on. I have Teles, but I don't have a 53' Tele, I have a Les Paul but I don't have a gold top 59'. Yes I have a Martin. A Pre War D-45? No, I don't have one of those.

Your collection may be small; it could be that your best piece is the 1950 Harmony that your grandfather left you. Not the four figure Harmony's but the $300-400 one. That's way cool! I have found in my travels, that collectors are proud of their collections regardless of what is actually in them, there are those who boast about the 53' Teles and such but in the end we are in one big fraternity and most are gracious. There will always be a collection superior to yours and mine.

I love to pick and collect. I also collect for another reason. A reason many collectors have scoffed at me and said, "I'm not a purist". I collect to invest in my retirement. Now don't get all shook up, it's not what I'm basing my sole retirement income on, nor is it even a small fraction of it. But guitars appreciate in value; the right ones, and I feel the ones I get will continue to appreciate, so twenty years from now I will have a good little nest egg. I have three or four pickers that I use, the rest come in, get tagged and stored away in my "guitar manger" (a shelving system I designed and had made to store my guitars).

OK, lets get to the title of this article, the business of collecting. I hope you didn't think that me using the term "business" meant I was speaking about it being your vocation. Not at all, but let's look at our collections. Be it big or small they aren't free and they are worth something and if it is American made chances are it will appreciate… it might take a while but it will. My point is, if this is your collection, lets for the moment leave the artistic side alone and lets look at the "business side".

So as previously mentioned your collection is worth something, many reading this magazine are thinking, "Yeah, mine is worth a lot more than something". Duly noted. Remember the size of your collection isn't important. One thing is certain; if you are a collector it's only going to get bigger. Lets be honest, when we talk about our guitars in front of others and our wives are present we say, "Well, I collect and trade and buy and sell guitars for a hobby". TRANSLATION: My wife is present so I make it sound like its an even exchange, buy one guitar, sell another to pay for it… but really I just buy and seldom sell. Can I get an Amen?

Are they protected? First do you keep them in a room with proper humidity? 45% is ideal; it's tough to do. Get a whole room humidifier and a humidity gauge (Amazon sells gauges for dirt cheap). Humidifiers can set you back 50-150 bucks but that is far below the cost of fixing a cracked spruce top. Yes, its time to treat the collection (even if its only 10% of the time) as an investment.

Inventory. My oldest daughter Hannah is an excellent 2nd grade teacher and she is equally excellent as a photographer. After years of saying I need to do it, she finally took the time to do the painstaking task of taking every guitar I had at the time, and photographing them at all different angles making sure to get serial numbers, tags, markings etc. I then took to the painstaking task of taking the pictures and putting all the pertinent information about that particular guitar (there are many home inventory programs that you can download for free and you can list each guitar you have). I then sent that "Guitar Dossier" to my Insurance agent. I printed off the pictures etc. and assigned a value to each. Don't short yourself, but make it fair market value +10%. Now a gentleman never shares values or numbers but for this I will tell you that my collection came in a bit shy of 6 figures and the insurance rider (remember this is in addition to your current home owners insurance) cost less than $250 bucks a year. This is worth a talk with your agent, most policies will cover this, but if you list it and add a separate rider it saves a lot of heartache and arguing with the insurance company.

So you see what I meant when I titled this article. I don't have the biggest, rarest, most expensive collection of guitars. I'm sure most of you reading have collections far superior than mine, but ya know what? It's my collection and I'm taking care of it and I'm going to devote some time to the business end of it and not just the picking artistic end.

Hopefully this will give you a little insight on insurance. It's not all equal.

I spoke with my agent, Lori Bastin of the Bastin Agency here in Ohio. (She represents State farm).

FIRST: Your homeowners insurance will cover your guitars in case of loss. HOWEVER, they are considered just another household possession and are covered as such. Therefore, that 53' Fender Tele that is worth $25k or so will in fact be covered for FAIR MARKET replacement value based on what an American made Tele sells for today. $1200-3000 depending on if it's a custom shop etc. THAT'S IT. You will not receive a check for $25k. However you can add an additional rider (that's what I have done) listing each instrument along with value. Now, if you list that 53' Tele for $25k you will get that amount in the event of loss. Of course an additional rider cost, well, additional money on top of your homeowners premium. It however is affordable.

Instrument Specific Insurance: Your homeowners or renters insurance will cover your instruments with additional riders in most cases, they are not however, instrument specific insurance policies.

Heritage Insurance Services Inc (www.heritagemusicinc.com) is such a company. I spoke with Mr. Ellis Hershman. He is the V.P of the company and he heads up the Stringed/Wood Instrument underwriting at Heritage. Wow. You talk about an education; I learned more about insuring our guitars in my interview with him that I ever have. Ok, insurance is insurance, we all get that, but there are underwriters that specialize in specific areas and by doing so can offer more than those underwriting our homeowner's policies. First,

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Tom Doyle's 1954 Gibson Les Paul Custom:
A Perspective in Hindsight

by Gabriel J. Hernandez

"Everyone's knickers are in a twist," was how one anonymous confidant summed it up.

"It's all a big fraud," said another.

"Much ado about nothing!" was still another opinion from an industry insider.

And so went the war of words between dealers, collectors, guitar players, and anyone else remotely interested in a controversial 1954 Gibson Les Paul Custom – or "Black Beauty" – once owned by Mr. Les Paul himself. It hit the auction block on Feb. 19, 2015, in an auction held by Guernsey's titled "The Tom Doyle Collection". Expectations were undoubtedly high, but the criticism surrounding the guitar was more like lions circling a herd of wildebeasts.

Mr. Doyle, of course, was Mr. Paul's longtime luthier and assistant, and owner of the guitar since 1976, when Mr. Paul gave it to him as a gift. The guitar was widely advertised by Guernsey's as the instrument Mr. Paul tinkered with the most, specifically billing it as, "The instrument from which Gibson's enormously popular Les Paul models evolved:". Additionally, the guitar was played by Mr. Paul countless times on The Les Paul & Mary Ford Show during the mid-1950s, as well as on many recordings and stage performances during that same time period. Basically, Mr. Paul used this particular guitar extensively from the time he received it from Gibson in early 1954 until he gifted it to Mr. Doyle in 1976.

The guitar remained in Mr. Doyle's possession until sometime last year when he decided to part with it. He employed the help of guitar dealer Max Stavron, who together with Guernsey's' President Arlan Ettinger put together a marketing campaign – or sales pitch, depending on your perspective – that rivaled that of any insurance company or beer manufacturer for a Super Bowl ad. However, the torch that ultimately

lit the raging debate was the cover of Guitar Player magazine's February issue, which crowned the controversial guitar as "The Grail," and declared it as "The Genesis of All Les Paul Guitars to Come!"

In an interview with the Washington Post, George Gruhn, one of the world's most respected vintage guitar dealers, addressed the article in Guitar Player magazine by saying, "That article is absolute bull, and the whole thing's as crooked as can be. It's an attack on everything I've worked on for over the last 50 years."

In that same Washington Post story, even blues legend/guitar collector Joe Bonamassa offered his opinion by declaring that he "wouldn't pay $10,000 for it".

"What it is is a carved up old Les Paul Custom that Les modified and gave to Tom," Bonamassa told the Washington Post. "I think Tom has the best of intentions with the guitar but Tom, because of his closeness to Les, may have an unrealistic value in his mind."

On the other side of the fence, however, were people like guitarist and classic rocker Steve Miller (Mr. Paul's godson), who told the Washington Post: "Is Tommy hyping it up a little bit? Heck yeah! But is this guitar an important guitar? It's an electric guitar, it's made by Gibson, and it was Les's guitar. That's what makes it a great guitar."

In the auction catalog, Miller went even further by writing that "without this very guitar, no other Les Paul guitars could exist in the form that we have come to know and love."

The auction took place at Arader Galleries in New York City and featured several other pieces of Les Paul memorabilia. In the end, despite all the naysayers and pessimists, the winning bid was placed by Mr. Christopher McKinney on behalf of Indianapolis Colts' owner Jim Irsay. The final sale price was $335,500 ($275,000 plus a $60,500 buyer's premium). When you consider Ettinger was on record in a New York Times' article saying he expected the guitar to fetch as much as $2 million, Irsay got it at a bargain basement price. Suffice to say he was happy as a clam about the whole thing.

"I was willing to go a little higher," Irsay told the Washington Post. "I know there was a lot of negative talk from a few guys who were well respected but look, it's an important guitar and I'm happy to have it as part of my collection. I don't believe it's the 'Holy Grail'. I don't think there is a Holy Grail, frankly. But it really enhances my collection significantly. And I'm really happy to have it".

So now the controversial guitar joins a collection that already includes the Fender Stratocaster played by Bob Dylan at the Newport Jazz Festival in 1965, and Jerry Garcia's Tiger, which

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VIEW OF THE DAY

by Dave Cleveland

A Tone Machine

Hello and greetings from Nashville Tennessee.

Home to some of the best guitar slingers in the world! Everyday I remind myself of what a privilege it is to live here and work as a fulltime session player.

Today I want to talk about one of my favorite subjects, Tone! (I can hear Mark Hill right now saying, "shut up Dave!"). Tone is so important in the life of a musician. It is our voice. We become known for our tone as much as we do the parts we play. To find the perfect combination of guitars, amps, pedals, speakers, strings, picks and cables is a constant pursuit. Fortunately, the tone journey is actually a lot of fun. I love trying new gear and new combinations of gear that I have had a long time. Tone will inspire you to play things that are beyond what you are actually capable of. With that in mind, let me talk about an amp that is a tone machine!

I have never done a gear review in my article but this month I want to give it a shot.

About 4 years ago I get a call from my friend Wayne Tate. He says to me that he has a friend that builds amps. "Oh boy, here we go", is what I thought. He asked me if they could send one down for me to try out and if I could give some feedback on it. So I said yes and forgot about it. Well, about 2 weeks later the UPS guy shows up at my house with the amp. I unbox it and plug it in. Whoa! This little amp sounded so good. Feel for days. The amp builders name is John Brinton. His company is Tyler Amps. The first amp he sent me was his take on a Fender Tweed Deluxe. It's called a 20/20. I tracked a record with it the next day. It just had great mojo on the track. John and I became friends and he started to branch out from the 20/20. He now makes several models: Flip Top, PT 14, SC6, JT60, JT46, JT 100, an all tube driven spring reverb and the amp I want to mention today, the HM30. All of the Tyler amps are hand wired with top-notch components. I tell people that try them to be careful because they are very revealing concerning your technique. You will hear exactly what you play into them. The great thing about playing through an amp like this is that it will take your tone to another level.

I have had my Tyler HM30 for about 3 weeks. I have used it on sessions and here at the house just as a form of enjoyment. It sounds amazing. The amp is based on a Matchless DC-30. It has 2 channels, which are voiced very differently. The first channel stays a little cleaner and more open, where as the second channel has a bit more of a chimey midrange thing. Channel 2 also has a little more natural compression to it. An AB box would be of great advantage. The EF 86 channel (channel 2) has so many amazing tonal options. You would be hard pressed not to find something on that channel that you didn't love. The combination of the rotary tone knob and the cut switch get you so many great choices. Not to mention using the low and hi input on each channel. When I was tracking with it I found myself falling in love with that second channel. It just has such great interaction with my guitars, pedals and touch. It also had a way of really sitting in the mix. As with most great tube amps, it takes a moment to find where the amp really sings. It didn't take long with the HM-30. I set it and forgot about it for the rest of the day. The amp has an effects loop that worked flawlessly. The loop really allows you to crank the amp and keep the time-based effects nice and clear. This amp came loaded with an Eminence Texas Heat speaker. I really like it. It's super musical at all volume levels. As you can see in the photos, the workmanship is superior. I know John puts in a lot of love and dedication into making these amps the best they can be. He also includes a verse from the Bible inside every chassis he wires. This one is Romans 8:6-8.

When John told me what he sells these for I had to do a double take. The single 12 HM30 lists at $1899. The Head with a 1210 cab goes for $2299. With the quality components and precision hand wiring that go into this amp I find that to be the best amp deal on the planet! You can check out Tyler amps on Facebook and also the website: Tyleramps.com

Sending you all the best,

Dave Cleveland

Dave Cleveland is a session guitarist from Nashville. He's recorded for Miley Cyrus, Martina McBride, Stephen Stills, Judy Collins, Whitney Wolanin & Girls Generation. He recently wrote the tv theme for Mud People and Mustang Millionaire.

the Straight Truth About Pickups by Jason Lollar

This was more like the dragon chasing us–over the years it's been one of our most requested pickup designs. Of course, we had to add our own twists, including sizing it to drop into a standard humbucker route. A2 magnets, custom covers, lot's of attitude.

Starting with a '60s Country Gentleman as a benchmark, we went after the classic rock-a-billy 'bucker tone, adding some "Lollar" along the way. The neck pickup is warm and buttery, with a clear, present top end. The bridge pickup is fat and honky, with a rich, defined low end. Combined, they sparkle and spank with clarity and punch. They'll cover everything from "OZ" rock to "Nashville Super Pickers" to "Hot Rods and Hot Babes…" Go Man, Go!

I've personally designed over a hundred different pickup models, including most of the vintage classics, some obscure works of art from steel guitars to clavinets, and even a few of my own designs that have never existed in the past.

I invite you to visit our website for sound clips, videos and current product information or feel free to give us a call.

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A V-Pick Tradition

by Eric Dahl

I became aware of V-Picks while attending the 2008 Winter Namm Show when I first met Nancy Smith (Mrs. V), co-owner of V-Picks. She gave me a free sample of the only pick design they offered at that time and I still have it. Vinni Smith, the other half of V-Picks, moved his family to Nashville, TN in the spring of 2011. I caught up with Smith and asked him questions about his now well established pick company.

Eric: When and where did you launch V-Picks?

Vinni: Well, I started making this kind of pick in 1980 back in California and I just did it for myself and for friends. Then in 2004 a buddy of mine, named John Dean, suggested that I name them V-Picks (after the V in my first name Vinni).

Eric: How did you come up with the idea to start making picks from a transparent Plexiglas material?

Vinni: I made picks from a lot of different materials including stone, wood, shells, glass, metal, coins you name it. I was very enamored with Plexiglas aquariums and I raised saltwater fish too. One day I was walking through the local hardware store and voila there it was (referring to a sheet of Plexiglas). I loved the way it looked and then I discovered how wonderful it sounded and felt in my fingers.

Eric: How did you make your first Namm Show appearance?

Vinni: It was back in 2008 and I was terrified to go, but Nancy said we must do it if we wanted our company to grow. So we took a second mortgage out on our home which provided the finances to pay for Namm and to buy a laser machine to help make picks quicker and easier.

Eric: Who was the first big artist that you secured?

Vinni: Carlos Santana, I had a dream of making picks for him from the start. Carlos plays our Freakishly Large Round V-Pick and his brother Jorge plays our picks too!

Eric: What is the difference between V-Picks compared to other guitar picks?

Vinni: First of all the acrylic. I think other pick companies just don't want to deal with it because it's a very difficult material to work with. We throw out a lot of stock that isn't up to our V-Pick standards. We hand pick acrylic that has the qualities of grippage, correct thickness, clear and flawless sheets. A V-Pick is much more grippy than other picks when it warms up between your fingers while playing. A lot of players call me and say they don't have a problem dropping their pick anymore with V-Picks. It is a wonderful tonal creation and they're the only picks on the market that are heat treated.

Eric: How many models do you currently offer?

Vinni: Over 100 models right now, if you count the different colors. Our picks cover all genres of music and playing styles.

Eric: Where are V-Picks created and why?

Vinni: We make all of our picks here in Tennessee either in Nashville or Jackson. We do not believe in out-sourcing any of our products and you will never see our products made in China. USA jobs all the way for us!

Eric: What's going on with your Signature Model picks?

Vinni: This series has become very popular with customers and currently includes Billy Gibbons, Brad Whitford, Phil Keaggy, Ed King, Johnny Hiland, Derek St. Holmes, Greg Martin and Ranger Doug. Along with the pick you get an actual autograph from the artist (not a copy).

Eric: How many stores do you currently provide picks to?

Vinni: We supply over 300 stores in the US and we have distribution in Japan, Germany and the UK.

Eric: As an accomplished guitarist yourself, what is your favorite pick to play?

Vinni: The Nexus Ghost Rim that my son Adam designed. I like it because it has a very aggressive bevel on it that creates a huge fat tone, like plucking the strings with your fingernails.

If your local music store doesn't currently carry V-Picks you can also order them online at v-picks.com. Pick prices range from $4 to $35 with a variety of thicknesses, shapes and edges available.

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"The Business of Guitar Collecting" continued from page 47

Heritage knows instruments, they will write a policy for you based on many factors, obviously the value of your instruments, but it's also based on environment and occupation. Are you a guitar collector, a touring musician, are the guitars kept in a safe, do you live full time at the location where the instruments are kept? There is a whole host of factors. The also offer different kinds of coverage. Fair Market Value, Agreed Value etc. Here's what clinched it for me. They insure for breakage and devaluation. We all know that 20K guitar that just broke the headstock is now valued at 10K. They will cover the repair ($1,000 bucks or so) but they will also cover you for the devaluation because of the repair.

Bottom line, get your information gathered and have all questions on paper. Ask them and ask again if you don't quite understand the answer. (Is breakage covered, is devaluation covered, if I ship guitars is that covered?) I specifically asked Ellis If I could post his email here, he was more than gracious to accommodate, its ellish@musicins.com

So do your homework and take care of the "business side " of your instruments.

Roger Sterry, resides in Ohio, Guitar enthusiast and collector, songwriter - father of 4, married to Kim, loves baseball
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"Tom Doyle's 1954 Gibson Les Paul Custom" continued from page 48

he played almost exclusively from 1979 to 1989.

But the questions still linger. Who was right? Is this 1954 Les Paul Custom guitar really worth what Irsay paid for it? And what impact – if any – did its sale have on today's vintage guitar market? The answers depend on who you ask, and/or who you believe.

"It's an important guitar", Irsay told Rolling Stone magazine shortly after the auction. "I don't feel it's the Holy Grail — that's a mythical term — but it has huge significance in that it was Paul's personal guitar and it was a huge influence in terms of producing electric guitars. I wasn't going to go north of $1 million, but I think we got it for a great price. I think it could've gone for a lot more. This is a guitar builder's guitar".

Pre-auction pessimists, however, continued their verbal assault on the guitar even after the auction was over. Longtime Cheap Trick guitarist Rick Nielson, who happens to own hundreds – if not thousands – of vintage guitars, told the Washington Post, "That's way more than it's worth. But it's been on the cover of a bunch of stuff and it's got the provenance of Les Paul having it at one point. I'm so happy it didn't go for $2.1 million".

That last statement from Nielson seems a bit troubling, especially coming from a man who owns so many vintage guitars. You'd think that Nielson – as the owner of so many vintage guitars – would want the guitar to sell for as much as possible. Yet he was one of the more vocal opponents of the guitar both prior to the auction, and then again after it. Even Bonamassa's comment about the guitar not being worth more than "$10,000" would seem to contradict the fact that he's quietly been amassing a sizeable collection of vintage guitars over the last few years, routinely paying six figures for several late 1950s and early 1960s Gibson guitars. Like Nielson, you'd expect Bonamassa would welcome any vintage guitar to sell for as much as possible – if anything to validate and enhance the values of their own collections.

Guernsey's President Arlan Ettinger, who is no stranger to controversial guitar auctions, was a bit taken aback by the negative comments prior to the auction, but nonetheless did his best to positively promote the auction any way he could.

"Working with Tom Doyle on the sale of this guitar and other pieces was a true and absolute honor," Ettinger said. "But I did think some of the things said about this guitar, especially what was quoted in the Washington Post stories, was outrageous. There's no real way to know if the negativity expressed prior to the auction actually impacted the sale, but personally I think it probably did".

Ettinger continued, "I saw for myself firsthand the love and respect displayed at the auction preview, as people were reminiscing with Tom and his family about Les; all the different musicians, studio techs, etc., that remembered the relationship that Tom had with Les, and who remembered this particular guitar and spoke in great detail with Tom about the guitar. And then to hear some of the negative comments that were made about it … that was just wrong".

As someone standing on the sidelines, with absolutely no stake whatsoever in this auction, I offer you the following opinion observation:

I think the so-called industry "experts" missed the boat on this one. Granted, the Les Paul model guitar was introduced as early as 1952. But it's also quite documented that Mr. Paul himself tinkered endlessly with its initial design and wasn't truly "happy" with the Les Paul until Gibson introduced the Les Paul Custom (his favorite model) in 1954, which was the product of a collaboration between Mr. Paul and Ted McCarty, Gibson's former president and chief executive.

I also believe this guitar was without a doubt one of two prototypes given to Mr. Paul by Gibson, and that it was not a stretch to surmise that all other Les Paul models that followed the introduction of the Les Paul Custom in 1954 were influenced in some way by this one Les Paul Custom guitar, which Mr. Paul used as the platform for his experimentations, and eventually gave to Doyle.

In hindsight, it was the use of the phrase "Holy Grail" by Guitar Player magazine that got the naysayer's blood boiling. And this – to me, anyway – was absurd. The situation definitely did not justify the reaction. We're talking about a guitar, albeit an important guitar, but not some shoddy example of a Les Paul Custom, that Gibson gave to Mr. Paul to experiment and play with. This guitar had clear and well-documented provenance, and consequently significant value.

Bottom line is this: the bidding for this guitar started at $25,000 and within five minutes ended up at $275,000. Mr. Irsay and his representative, Mr. McKinney, were not the only ones bidding on this guitar, which means there were others that thought this guitar had significant value. Plus, Mr. McKinney told The New York Times he was authorized to bid as high as $625,000 for the guitar.

"We know the importance of the guitar historically", Mr. McKinney told The New York Times. "This guitar was used by Les in recordings and in television. It was his main guitar for innovations. It shows his thinking and progress as an inventor. A lot of the things that were done to this guitar went on to become industry standard".

Personally, I'm very happy for Mr. Doyle… and even happier about the positive statement it makes for the current state of the vintage guitar market, in general. And had it sold for more (in other words, had the naysayers held their tongues in check) all of us would have benefitted even more from it.

Invoking an old cliché (if I may), you can choose to look at any situation in life as a glass half empty, or a glass half full. In this case, looking at the glass half full would have definitely been better for all us in the vintage guitar market. Why anyone would have wanted to see it otherwise is beyond me.

Gabriel J. Hernandez is the owner of Blues Vintage Guitars, Inc., a shop in Nashville, Tennessee, specializing in the buying and selling of vintage and newer high-end guitars and gear. He is also an accomplished writer, having earned a B.S. in Journalism from The University of Florida in 1988. Over a 25-year career he has worked as an investigative journalist for several news organizations and publishing companies, as a staff sports writer for The Palm Beach Post, and most recently as the Web Editor for Gibson Guitars at the company's worldwide headquarters in Nashville. Hernandez has played guitar since the age of six, and been fascinated (some say obsessed) by the instrument – and music in general – ever since. You can reach him any time at 1-615-613-1389, or visit his company's web site at www.bluesvintageguitars.com.

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